

EN OΛΙΓΩ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΟΣ:

THE  
Almost Christian  
DISCOVERED:  
OR, THE  
*FALSE PROFESSOR*  
TRYED and CAST.

Being the substance of Seven

SERMONS,

First Preached at *Sepulchres, London, 1661.*

And now at the importunity of Friends  
made Publick.

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By *MATTHEW MEADE.*

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Luk. 16. 14. *And the Pharisees who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him.*

Verf. 15. *And Jesus said unto them, Ye are they which justifye your selves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: For that which is highly esteemed amongst men is abomination in the sight of God.*

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*London, Printed by R. W. for Thomas Parkhurst, at the Golden-Bible on London-bridge, 1668.*

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To the Congregation at Sepulchres, that were the Auditors of these Sermons;

*Grace and Peace be multiplied.*

Beloved,



That the meaning of that Providence was, that called me to the occupation of my Talent amongst you this Summer, will be best read and understood by the effects of it upon your own souls; The kindly encrease of grace and holiness in heart and life, can only prove it to have been in mercy; where there is not the fruit of the Word, there it becomes a Judgement. The Word travels with life or death, salvation or damnation, and bringeth forth one or other in every soul that bears it; I would not for a world (were it in my power to make the choice) that my labours, which were meant and designed for the promotion of your immortal

## The Epistle Dedicatory.

souls, to the glory of the other world, in a present pursuance of the things of your peace, should be found to have been a Ministration of Death and Condemnation, in the great day of Jesus Christ. Yet this (the Lord knoweth) is the too common effect of the most plain and powerful preaching of the Gospel. The waters of the Sanctuary do not alwayes heal where they come; for there are miry and marish places that shall be given to Salt. **לסלח כתבו** The same word (**לסלח**) is elsewhere in Scripture rendred barrenness. **Ezek. 47.** be turneth a fruitful land (**לסלח**) into barrenness; so that the Judgement denounced upon these miry and marish places, is, that the curse of barrenness shall rest upon them, notwithstanding the waters of the Sanctuary overflow them. **Psal. 107.** 34.

It is sad, but certain, that the Gospel inflicteth a death of its own, as well as the Law; or else how are those Trees **Jude** said to be *dic. sandarbas*, twice dead, plucked up by the roots? Yet that which in it self is the greatest mercy, through the interposition of men's lusts, and the efficacy of this cursed sin of unbelief, turneth to the greatest Judgement, as the richest and most generous **W**

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Wine makes the sharpest Vinegar. Our Lord Christ himself, the choicest mercy Rom. 5. 2 that the Bowels of a God could bless a perishing World withall, whose coming Joh. 3. 16 (himself bearing witness) was no less Errand than that of Eternal Life and Blessedness to the lost and cursed Sons of Adam: Yet to how many was he אבן עזר a stone of stum- Joh. 10. 1 bling; and a Rock of offence; Yea, a gin and a snare, and that to both the Isa. 2. 14 Houses of Israel, the only professing people of God at that day in the world. And is he not a stone of stumbling in the Ministry of the Gospel to many professors to this very day, upon which they fall and are braken? When he saith, Blessed is he whosoever Mar. 11. 6 shall not be offended in me; he doth therein plainly suppose, that both in his Person and Doctrine the generality of men would be offended in him.

Not that this is the design of Christ and the Gospel, but it comes so to pass through the corruptions of the hearts of men, whereby they make light of Christ, and stand out against that life and grace which the Lord Jesus by his Blood so dearly purchased, and is by the preaching of the Gospel so freely tendered; the wil-

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ful refusal whereof will as surely double our damnation, as the acceptance thereof will secure our eternal salvation.

Ob consider it is a thing of the most serious concernment in the world, how we carry our selves under the Gospel, and with what dispositions and affections of heart and soul, seasons of grace are entertained; this being taken into the consideration to make it weight, that we are the nearer to Heaven or to Hell, to Salvation or Damnation, by every Ordinance we sit under: Boast not therefore of priviledges enjoyed with neglect of the important duties thereby required. Remember Capernaums case, and tremble: As many go to Heaven by the very gates of Hell, so many go to Hell by the gates of Heaven, in that the number of them that profess Christ, is greater than the number of them that truly close with Christ.

Beloved, I know the Preaching of the Gospel hath profelyted many of you into a Profession; but I fear that but few of you are brought by it to a true close with the Lord Christ for salvation. (I beseech you bear with my jealousy, for it is the fruit of a tender love to your precious souls.) Most men are good Christians in

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the verdict of their own opinion; but you know the Law alloweth no man to be a witness in his own case, because their affection usually out-acteth Conscience, and self-love balketh Truth for its own interest.

The heart of man is the greatest Impostor and Cheat in the world; God himself adjusts it, Jer. 17. 9. The heart is deceitful above all things. Some of the deceits whereof you will find discovered in this Treatise, which sheweth you that every Grace hath its counterfeite, and that the highest Profession may be, where true Conversion is not.

The design hereof is not to break the braised Reed, nor to quench the smoking Flax; not to discourage the weakest Believer, but to awaken formal Professors. I would not sad the hearts of any, whom God would not have made sad, though I know it is hard to rip up the dangerous estate and condition of a professing Hypocrite; but that the weak Christian will think himself concerned in the discovery. And therefore as I Preached a Sermon on Sincerity among you, for the support and encouragement of such, at the end of this; so I did purpose

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pose to have printed it with this: But who can be Master of his own purposes, that (as I am) under such daily variety of Providences! your kindly acceptance of this, will make me a debtor for that.

The Dedication hereof, belongs to you on a double account; for as it had not been preached, but that love to your souls caused it, so it had much less been printed, but that your importunate desire procured it. And therefore what entertainment soever it findeth in the world, yet I hope I may expect you will welcome it, especially considering it was born under your Roof, and therefore hopes to find favour in your eyes and room in your hearts.

Accept it, I beseech you, as a public acknowledgement of the Engagement which your great, and (I think I may say) unparallel'd Respects have laid me under, which I can no way compensate, but by my prayers; and if you will take them for satisfaction, I do promise to be your Remembrancer at the Throne of Grace, which I am

Matthew Meade.

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## To the Reader.

Reader,

**I** Know how customary it is for men to ascend the publick Stage, with premised Apologies for the weakness and unworthiness of their labours, which is an argument that their desires (either for the sake of others profit, or their own credit, or both) are stretched beyond the tedder of their abilities; and that they covet to commend themselves to the Worlds censure, in a better dress than common infirmity will allow; for my own part I may truly say with *Gideon*, *Behold my thousand is the meanest*, (my Talent is the smallest) and I am the least in my Fathers house; and therefore this appearance in publick is not the fruit of my own choice, which *Judg. 6. 15* would rather have been in some other subject, wherein I stand in some sense indebted to the World, or else in

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To the Reader.

Gal. 6. 8. somewhat more digested, and possibly better fitted for common acceptance; but this is but to consult the interest of a mans own name, which in matters of this concern, is no better than a *sowing to the flesh*, and the harvest of such Seeds-time will be *in corruption*.

Cor. 9. 14. Thou hast here one of the saddest considerations imaginable presented to thee, and that is, how far it is possible a man may go in a profession of Religion, and yet after all fall short of Salvation; How far he may run, and yet not *so run as to obtain*; this, I say, is sad, but not so sad as true; for our Lord Christ doth plainly attest it, *Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

My design herein is, that the formal sleepy Professor may be awakened, and the close Hypocrite discovered; but my fear is, that weak believers may be hereby discouraged; for as it is hard to shew how low a Child of God may fall into sin, and yet have true grace, but that the sinner will be apt thereupon to presume; so it is as hard to shew how high an Hypocrite may  
rise



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rite in a Profession, and yet have no grace, but that the Believer will be apt thereupon to despond. The prevention whereof I have carefully endeavoured, by shewing, That though a man may go thus far, and yet be but *Almost a Christian*; yet a man may fall short of this, and be a true *Christian*, notwithstanding; judge not therefore thy state by any one *Character* thou findest laid down of a False Professor, but read the whole, and then make a judgement: For I have cared, as not to give *childrens bread to dogs*; so not to *Mat. 15.* use the *Dog-whip* to scare the *children*: 26. yet I could wish that this *Book* might fall into the hands of such only whom it chiefly concerns, who *have a name* *Rev. 3. 1.* *to live, and yet are dead*; being busie with the *form of Godliness*, but strangers to the *power of it*. These are the proper subjects of this Treatise: And the Lord follow it with his blessing where-ever it comes, that it may be an awakening word to all such, and especially to that Generation of profligate professors (with which this Age abounds) who, if they keep to their Church, bow the knee, tale out a few

*To the Reader.*

few prayers, and at a good time receive the *Sacrament*, think they do enough for Heaven, and hereupon judge their condition safe, and their salvation on sure; though there be a hell of sin in their hearts, *and the poyson of Ass*  
*Rom. 3. 13.* *under their lips*, their minds being yet carnal and unconverted, and their Conversations filthy and unsanctified. If eternal life be of so easie attainment, and to be had at so cheap a rate of devotion, it is to me a wonder what our Lord Christ meant to tell us, *Strait*  
*Mat. 7. 14.* *is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and there be few that find it.* And why the Apostle should perplex us with such a needless injunction, *To give diligence to make their calling and election sure*; certainly therefore it is no such easie thing to be saved, as many make it, and that thou wilt see plainly in the following Discourse: I have been somewhat short in the application of it, and therefore let me here be thy Remembrancer in five important duties.

First, *Take heed of resting in a form of Godliness*, as if Duties *ex opere operato* could confer grace; a lifeless formality

To the Reader.

lity is advanced to a very high esteem in the world, as a *Kab of Doves Dung* 2 Kings 6. was sold in the Famine of *Samaria*, at <sup>25.</sup> a very dear rate. Alas the profession of Godliness is but a sandy foundation, to build the hope of an immortal Soul upon for Eternity; remember the Lord Jesus Christ called him a foolish builder, *that founded his house* Mar. 7. 16. *upon the sand*; and the sad event proved him so, *for it fell, and great was the* Verse 27. *fall of it*; Oh therefore lay thy foundations by Faith upon the Rock Christ Jesus; look to Christ through all, and rest upon Christ in all. 1 Cor. 3. 12.

Secondly, *Labour to see an excellency in the Power of Godliness*, a Beauty in the life of Christ; If the means of Grace have a loveliness in them, surely Grace it self hath much more; for *finis dat amabilitatem mediis*; the goodness of the means lies in its suitability and serviceableness to the end; the form of godliness hath no goodness in it, any farther than it stands and becomes useful to the soul in the power and practice of Godliness. The life of Holiness is the only excellent life; it is the life of Saints and

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and Angels in heaven, yea, it is the life of God himself. As it is a great proof of the baseness and filthiness of sin, that sinners seek to cover it; so it is a great proof of the excellency of Godliness, that so many pretend to it. The very Hypocrites fair profession pleads the cause of Religion; although the Hypocrite is then really worst, when he is seemingly best.

Thirdly, *Look upon things to come as the greatest realities; for non entis & non apparentis idem est affectus*; things that are not believed, work no more upon the affections, than if they had no being; and this is the grand reason why the generality of men suffer their affection to lacquey after the world, setting the Creature in the place of God in their hearts.

Most men judge of the reality of things by their visibility and proximity to Sense; and therefore the choice of that wretched Cardinal becomes their Option, who would not leave his part in *Paris*, for his part in *Paradise*; sure whatever his interest might be in the former, he had little enough in the latter: Well may

*Malum ubi  
bonum se  
simulat,  
quicquid  
efficitur.*

To the Reader.

may covetousness be called Idolatry, when it thus chases the World for its God. Col. 3. 5.

O consider Eternity is no Dream; Hell and the Worm that never dies, is no melancholy conceit; Heaven is no feigned *Elysium*: There is the greatest reality imaginable in these things; though they are spiritual, and out of the ken of sense, yet they are real, and within the view of faith: *Look not therefore at the things which are seen, but look at the things which are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.* 2 Cor. 4. 18.

Fourthly, Set a high rate upon thy soul; what we lightly prize, we easily part with; many men sell their souls (at the rate of prophane Esau's birth-right) for a morsel of meat, nay, for that which (in the sense of the Holy Ghost) is not bread. O consider, thy soul is the most precious and invaluable Jewel in the world; it is *οὐρα τεικτε-ν & καλὸν ποίημα*, the most beautiful piece of Gods workmanship in the whole Creation; it is that which bears the Image of God, and which was bought

To the Reader.

1 Pet. 1. 18, 19. bought with the Blood of the Son of God; and shall we not set a value upon it, and count it precious?

The Apostle Peter speaks of three very precious things.

1 Pet. 2. 7.

2 Pet. 1. 4.

& 1. 1.

{ A precious Christ.

{ Precious Promises.

{ And precious Faith.

Now the preciousness of all these lies in their usefulness to the Soul. Christ is precious, as being the Redeemer of precious souls; the Promises are precious, as making over this precious Christ to precious souls. Faith is precious, as bringing a precious soul to close with a precious Christ, as he is held forth in the precious promises. Oh take heed that thou art not found over-valuing other things, and undervaluing thy soul. Shall thy flesh, nay thy beast be loved, and shall thy soul be slighted? wilt thou cloath and pamper thy body, and yet take no care of thy soul? this is as if a man should feed his Dog, and starve his Childe: Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them. Oh let not a tottering perishing carcass have all your time and care,

1 Cor. 6.

13.

*To the Reader.*

are, as if the life and salvation of thy soul were not worth the while.

Lastly, *Meditate much of the strictness and suddenness of that Judgement-day, which thou and I must pass through into an everlasting state, wherein God the impartial Judge will require an account at our hands, of all our Talents and bequests; we must then account for time, how we have spent that; for Estate, how we have employed that; for strength, how we have laid out that; for affections and mercies, how they have been improved; for the Relations we stood in here, how they have been discharged; and for seasons and means of Grace, how they have been husbanded; and look how we have sowed here, so shall we reap* Gal. 6. 7. *hereafter.*

*Reader,* These are things that of all other deserve most of, and call loudest for our utmost care and endeavour, though by the most least minded: To consider what a spirit of Atheism (if we may judge the tree by the fruits, and the principle by the practice) the hearts of most men are filled with, who live, as if God were not to be served,

Mat. 7. 19.  
20.



To the Reader.

served, nor Christ to be sought, nor  
lust to be mortified, nor self to be  
denied, nor the Scripture to be believed,  
nor the Judgement-day to be minded,  
nor Hell to be feared, nor Heaven  
to be desired, nor the Soul to be valued,  
but give up themselves to a worse  
than brutish sensuality, *to work all un-*  
*cleanness with greediness,* living with-  
out God in the world: This is a me-  
ditation fit enough to break our hearts,  
if at least we were of holy *David's* ten-  
per, who *beheld the transgressors and was*  
*grieved,* and had *Rivers of waters run-*  
*ning down his Eyes, because men kept not*  
*Gods Laws.* The prevention and cor-  
rection of this Soul-destroying distem-  
per, is not the least design of this Treas-  
ure now put into thy hand, though the  
chief virtue of this Receipt lies in its  
Sovereign use to assuage and cure the  
swelling Tympany of Hypocrisie; yet  
it may serve also (with Gods blessing)  
as a plaister for the Plague-sore of pro-  
phaneness, if timely applied by serious  
Meditation, and carefully kept on by  
constant Prayer.

Reader, Expect nothing of curiosity  
or quaintness, for then I shall deceive  
thee.



To the Reader.

nee; but if thou wouldst have a touch-  
done for the tryal of thy state, possi-  
evely this may stead thee: If thou art  
nder a stranger to a profession, or an  
en hypocrite under a profession, then  
luead and tremble, for thou art the man  
vorne pointed at.

— Mutato nomine de te

Horat.

Fabula narratur —

But if the Kingdom of God be come Mark 9. 1.  
with power into thy soul; if Christ be Luk. 17. 21.  
formed in thee; if thy heart be up-  
right and sincere with God, then read  
and rejoyce.

I fear I have transgressed the bounds  
of an Epistle; The Mighty God, whose Isa. 48. 17.  
Prerogative it is to teach, to profit,  
whether by the tongue, or the pen,  
by speaking, or writing, bless this  
Tract, that it may be to thee as a  
Cloud of Rain to the dry ground,  
dropping fatness to thy soul, that so  
thy Fleece being watered with the dew  
of Heaven, thou mayest grow in grace, 2Pet. 3. 18.  
and in the knowledge of our Lord and Sa-  
viour Jesus Christ; In whom I am,

Thy Friend and Servant,

London, Oct. 29.

1661.

Mt. Meade.

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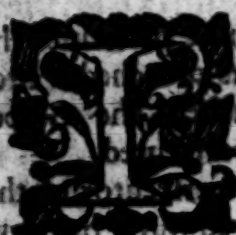
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ACTS 26. 28.

Εν ὀλίγῳ μὲ πείσεις χριστιανὸν  
γινέσθαι.

Almost thou persuadest me to  
be a Christian.



In this Chapter you have the Apostle Pauls Apology and Defensive Plea which he makes for himself against those blind Jews which did so maliciously prosecute him before Agrippa, Festus, Bernice, and the Council.

In which Plea he doth chiefly insist upon three things.

The manner of his life before conversion.

The manner of his conversion.

The manner of his life after conversion.

How he lived before conversion, he tells you from v. 4. to 13.

How God wrought on him to conversion, he tells you from v. 13, to 18.

How he lived after conversion, he tells you from v. 19, to 23.

Before conversion he was very Phariſaical.

The manner of his conversion was very wonderful.

The fruit of his conversion was very remarkable.

Before conversion he persecuted the Gospel which others preached: after conversion he preached the Gospel which himself had persecuted.

While he was a persecutor of the Gospel, the *Jews* loved him; but now that (by the grace of God) he was become a Preacher of the Gospel, now the *Jews* hate him, and sought to kill him.

He was once against Christ, and then many were for him, but now that he was for Christ, all were against him; his being an enemy to Jesus made others his friends; but when he came to own Jesus, then they became his enemies.

And this was the great charge they had against him, that of a great Oppo-

Verse 21.

Verse 9.

ser he was become a great Professor.

Because God had changed him, therefore this enraged them. As if they would be the worse, because God had made him better; God had wrought on him by Grace, and they seem to envy him the grace of God.

*Hic vir in-  
videt mihi  
gratiam  
Christi.*

He preached no Treason, nor sowed no Sedition; only he preached Repen-  
tance, and Faith in Christ, and the Re-  
surrection, and for this he was called  
into question.

*any*

This is the Breviate and Sum of Pauls defence and Plea for himself, which you find in the sequel of the Chapter, had a different effect upon his Judges.

*Festus* seems to censure him, v. 24.

*Agrippa* seems to be convinced by him, v. 28.

The whole Bench seem to acquit him, v. 30, 31.

*Festus* he thinks Paul was beside himself.

*Agrippa* he is almost perswaded to be such a one as himself.

*Festus* thinks him mad, because he did not understand the Doctrine of Christ, and the Resurrection; Much learning  
hath made thee mad.

*Dei sapien-  
tia, mundi  
est insania.  
Malc. in  
loc.*

B. 5

A-



*Putat ho-  
minem esse  
fanaticum.  
Mar. in  
loci e*

*Agrippa* he is so affected with his Plea, that he is almost wrought into his principle: *Paul* pleads so effectually for his Religion, that *Agrippa* seems to be upon the turning point to his profession.

Then *Agrippa* said to *Paul*, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*

*Almost* ] *ὁλὺω*, so the Greek; the words make some debate among the Learned. I shall not trouble you with the various hints upon them by *Vallis*, *Simplicius*, *Beza*, *Erasmus*, and others. I take the words as we read them, and they shew what an efficacy *Paul's* doctrine had upon *Agrippa's* conscience. Though he would not be converted, yet he could not but be convinced. His conscience was touched, though his heart was not renewed.

*Observ.* There is that in Religion, which carries its own evidence along with it, even to the consciences of ungodly men.

*Thou persuadest me* ] *πείθεις*, the word is from the Hebrew *פָּתַח* and it signifies both *suadere* and *persuadere*, either to use arguments to prevail, or to prevail by the arguments used.

*Suadere est  
convincere,  
persuadere  
est efficien-  
tia. Beza.*

Now it is to be taken in the latter sense.



sense here, to shew the influence of Pauls argument upon Agrippa, which had almost profelyted him to the profession of Christianity. *Suadet qui consulit; persuadet, qui quo vult inducit hominem.* Eras.

Almost thou perswadest me to be a Christian.

A Christian. ] *Christiavus veridicus.*

I hope I need not tell you what a Christian is, though I am perswaded many that are called *Christians*, do not know what a Christian is; or if they do, yet they don't know what it is to be a Christian.

A Christian is a Disciple of Jesus Christ; one that believes in, and follows Christ. As he that imbraces the doctrine of *Arminius*, is called an *Arminian*; and as he that owns the doctrine and way of *Luther*, is called a *Lutheran*; so he that imbraces and owns and follows the doctrine of Jesus Christ, he is called a Christian.

The word is taken more largely, and more strictly; more largely, and so all that profess Christ come in the flesh, are called Christians, in opposition to *Heathens* that do not know Christ; and to the poor blind *Jews*, that will not own Christ; and to the *Mahometan*,

*Mahometan, that prefers Mahomet above Christ.*

But now in Scripture, the word of a more strict and narrow acceptation; it is used only to denominate the true Disciples and followers of Christ. *Acts 11. 26. The Disciples were first called Christians at Antioch, 1 Pet. 16. If any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed, that is, a Member, a Disciple of Christ, and so in the Text, Almost thou persuadest me to be Christian.*

The word is used but in these three places (as I find) in all the New Testament, and in each of them it signifies in the sense afore-mentioned.

*Fulk Nor.  
on Rhem.  
Test.*

The *Italians* make the name to be a name of reproach among them, and do usually abuse the word Christian to signify a fool.

*1 Cor. 1.  
18.*

But if, as the Apostle saith, *the Preaching of Christ is to the World foolishness*, then it is no wonder that the Disciples of Christ are to the World fools.

*1 Tim. 3.  
16.*

Yet it is true (in a sound sense) for they are: For the whole of godliness is a Mystery.

A man must *dye*, that would *live* ;  
he must be *empty*, that would be *full* ;  
he must be *lost*, that would be *found* ;  
he must *have nothing*, that would *have*  
*all things* ; he must be *blind*, that would  
*have illumination* ; he must be *condemned*,  
that would *have redemption* ; so he  
must be a *fool*, that would be a *Chri-*  
*stian* : If any man among you seems to be  
*wise*, let him become a *fool*, that he may  
be *wise*. 2<sup>d</sup> Cor. 4.  
11.

He is the true Christian, that is the  
Worlds fool, but wise to salvation.

Thus you have the sense and mean-  
ing of the words briefly explained.

The Text needs no division, and  
yet it is pity, the *almost* should not be  
divided from the *Christian*.

Though it is of little avail to divide  
them as they are linked in the Text,  
unless I could divide them as they are  
united in your hearts; this would be  
a blessed division, if the *almost* might  
be taken from the *Christian* : That so  
you may not be only *ἐν ὀλίγῳ*, but  
*ἐν πολλῷ*, not only *propemodum*, but *ad-*  
*modum*, not only almost, but altogether  
Christians.

This is Gods work to effect it ; but  
it

it is our duty to perswade to it, and  
 O that God would help me to manage this subject so, that you may say in the conclusion, Thou perswaded me (not almost, but) altogether to be a Christian.

The Observation that I shall propound to handle, is this.

Doct.

*There are very many in the world, that are almost, and yet but almost Christians; many that are near heaven, and yet are ne're the near; many that are within a little of Salvation, and yet shall never enjoy the least Salvation: they are within sight of Heaven, and yet shall never have a sight of God.*

There are two sad expressions in Scripture, which I cannot but take notice of in this place.

*The one is concerning the truly righteous.*

*The other is concerning the seemingly righteous.*

It is said of the truly righteous, he shall scarcely be saved; and it is said of the seemingly righteous, he shall be almost saved. Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God, Mark 12. 24.

The righteous shall be saved with

ΕΒΛΙΣ

Ζετωαι

Pet. 4. 18.

a scarcely; that is, through much difficulty; he shall go to heaven through many sad fears of hell.

The Hypocrite shall be saved with an almost; that is, he shall go to hell through many fair hopes of heaven.

*Quod vix  
fit fit;  
quod seire  
fit non fit.*

There are two things arise from hence, of very serious Meditation.

The one is, how oft a Believer may miscarry, how low he may fall, and yet have true grace.

The other is, how far an Hypocrite may go in the way to heaven, how high he may attain, and yet have no grace.

The Saint may be cast down very near to hell, and yet shall never come there; and the Hypocrite may be lifted up very near to heaven, and yet never come there.

The Saint may almost perish, and yet be saved eternally; the Hypocrite may almost be saved, and yet perish finally.

For the Saint at worst is really a believer, and the Hypocrite at best is really a sinner.

Before I handle the *Doctrine*, I must premise three things which are of great use for the establishing of weak believers,

believers, that they may not be shaken and discouraged by this Doctrine.

First, There is nothing in the Doctrine that should be matter of stumbling or discouragement to weak Christians.

The Gospel doth not speak things to wound believers, but to awaken sinners and formal professors.

As there are none more averse than weak believers, to apply the promises and comforts of the Gospel to themselves, for whom they are properly designed: So there are none more ready than they to apply the threats and severest things of the Word to themselves for whom they were never intended.

As the Disciples, when Christ told them, *One of you shall betray me*, they that were innocent, suspected themselves most, and therefore cry out, *Master is it I?*

So weak Christians, when they hear sinners reprov'd, or the Hypocrite laid open in the Ministry of the Word, they presently cry out, *Is it I?*

It is the Hypocrites fault to sit under the tryals and discoveries of the Word, and yet not to mind them.

And



And it is the weak Christians fault  
to draw sad conclusions of their own  
state from premises which nothing con-  
cern them.

There is indeed great use of such  
Doctrine as this is, to all believers.

1. To make them look to their  
standing, upon what bottom they are,  
and to see that the foundation of their  
hope be well laid, that they build not  
upon the Sand, but upon a Rock.

Mar. 7. 24.  
26.

2. It helps to raise our admiration  
of the distinguishing love of God, in  
bringing us into the way everlasting,  
when so many perish from the way;  
and in over-powring our souls into a  
true conversion, when so many take  
up with a graceless profession.

1 Cor. 13.  
5.

3. It incites to that excellent duty  
of heart-searching, that so we approve  
our selves to God in sincerity.

4. It engages the soul in double di-  
ligence, that it may be found not only  
believing, but persevering in faith to  
the end.

These duties (and such as these are)  
make this Doctrine of use to all belie-  
vers; but they ought not to make use  
of it as a stumbling-block in the way  
of their peace and comfort.

My





My design in preaching on this subject, is not to make sad the souls of those whom Christ will not make sad; I would bring water not to quench the flax that is smoking, but to put out that false fire that is of the sinners own kindling, lest walking all dayes by the light thereof, he shall at last lie down in sorrow.

Mat. 12.  
20.

Isa. 50. 1.

My aim is to level the Mountain of the sinners confidence, not to weaken the hand of the believers faith and dependence; to awaken and bring in cure formal sinners, not to discourage weak believers.

Secondly, I would premise, though many may go far (very far) in the way to Heaven, and yet be short; yet that soul that hath the least true grace, shall never fall short.

Job 17. 9. *righteous shall hold on his way.*

Though some may do very much in a way of duty (as I shall shew hereafter) and yet miscarry; yet that soul that doth duty with the least sincerity shall never miscarry. For he saith the upright in heart.

Psal. 7. 10.

The least measure of true grace is saving as the greatest; it saves as sure

though not so comfortably. The  
first grace gives a full interest in the  
blood of Christ, whereby we are  
thoroughly purged; and it gives a full  
interest in the strength and power of  
Christ, whereby we shall be certainly  
all reserved.

Christ keeps faith in the soul, and  
faith keeps the soul in Christ, and so  
we are kept by the Power of God, through 1 Pet. 1. 6.  
to salvation.

Thirdly, I would premise this; they  
that can hear such truths as this, with-  
out serious reflection, and self-exami-  
nation, I much suspect the goodness  
of their condition.

You'll suspect that man to be next  
door to a Bankrupt, that never casts  
up his shop, nor looks over his books;  
and I as verily think that man an Hy-  
pocrite, that never searches nor deals  
with his own heart.

He that goes on in a road of duties  
without any rub or doubting of his  
state, I doubt no mans state more than  
his.

When we see a man sick, and yet  
not sensible, we conclude the tokens of  
death are upon him.

So

So when sinners have no sense of their spiritual condition, it is my judgment that they are dead in sin, the Tokens of Eternal Death are upon them.

These things being premised (what I desire you would carry along in your mind while we travel through this subject) I come to speak to the Proposition more distinctly and closely.

**Doct.**

*That there are very many in the world that are almost, and yet but almost Christians.*

I shall demonstrate the truth of this Proposition, and then proceed to a more distinct prosecution.

I. I shall demonstrate the truth of the Proposition, and I shall do it by Scripture evidence, which speaks plain and fully to the case.

1. The young man in the Gospel is an eminent proof of this truth, in Luke 19. 16, to 23. There you read of a young man that came to Christ, to learn of him the way to Heaven; Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

Verse 16. *good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*

Our Lord Christ tells him, If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments; and when Christ tells him which

few answers, *Lord, all these have I kept* Verse 20.  
*is in my youth up; what lack I yet?*

Now do but see how far this man  
 went.

(w<sup>th</sup> 1. *He obeyed* ] he did not only hear  
 in the Commands of God; but he kept  
 his own; now the Scripture saith, *blessed Luk. 11. 8.*  
*who he that hears the Word of God, and*  
*keeps it.*

(w<sup>th</sup> 2. *He obeyed universally* ] not this or  
 that command, but both this and that;  
 he did not halve it with God, or pick  
 out of it those which were easiest to be  
 done, and leave the rest; no, but he  
 kept all, *all these things have I kept.*

(w<sup>th</sup> 3. *He obeyed constantly* ] not in a fit  
 of zeal only, but in a continued series  
 of duty; his goodness was not (as  
 the *morning dew*, that *Hos. 6. 4.*  
 passes away; no, *all these things have*  
*I kept from my youth up.*

(w<sup>th</sup> 4. *He professeth his desire to know and*  
*do more* ] so perfect that which was lacking  
 in his obedience; and therefore he goes  
 to Christ to instruct him in his duty;  
*after, what lack I yet?* Now would  
 you not think this a good man? alas,  
 how few go thus far?

And yet as far as he went, he went  
 not

not far enough; *He was almost, and the*  
*but almost a Christian*; for he was *r p*  
 unsound Hypocrite; he forsakes *np b*  
 Verse 21. at last, and cleaves to his lust. *. T*

This then is a full proof of the truth *an*  
 of the Doctrine. *in du*

A second proof of it, is that of *man*  
 Parable of the Virgins, *Mat. 25* do a  
 and so on. *. T*

See what a progress they make, how *wer*  
 far they go in a profession of Christ, *s spe*

1. *They are called Virgins*] Now *wo*  
 is a name given in the Scripture, *bo 6. T*  
 Psal. 45. 11. in the Old Testament, and New, to *y j*  
 2 Cor. 11. Saints of Christ, *Cant. 1. 3. The Virgins* *jo*  
 2, 3. *love thee*: So *Rev. 14. 4.* the one *had w*  
 hundred and forty four thousand, *there t*  
 stood with the Lamb on Mount *Sin 7. T*  
 are called *Virgins*. They are *call om*  
*Virgins*, because they are not *defin se*  
 2 Pet. 1. 4. *with the corruptions that are in the world*. *8.*  
 Mat. 25. 1. *through lust*. *ade*

Now these here seem to be of the *num*  
 sort, for they are called *Virgins*. *ore*

Verse 3. 2. *They take their Lamps*, ] that *with*  
 they made a profession of Christ. *9.*

3. *They had some kind of Oyl in their* *n't*  
*Lamps*] as appears *v. 8.* they had *for*  
 convictions, and some faith ( *thoug nel*

and the faith of Gods Elect ) to keep *Hi sunt non*  
 was r profession alive, to keep the *qualescun-*  
 Chimp burning. *que anima,*

1. *They went* ] their profession was *sed tales*  
 an idle profession, they did per- *que habent*  
 in duties, frequent Ordinances, and *Catholicism*  
 of many things commanded, they *fidem, &*  
 2. *do a progress, they went.* *habere vi-*  
*dentur bo-*

3. *They went forth* ] they went, and *na opera*  
 , how went, they left many behind them; *in Ecclesia*  
 rift, speaks out their separation from *Dei. Aug.*  
 w world. *de Ser.*  
*Dom. Ser.*

4. *They went with the wise Virgins* ] *13.*  
 to y joyned themselves to those who *Verse 1;*  
 Virgins joyned themselves to the Lord,  
 e had were the companions of them that  
 , there the companions of Christ.

5. *They go forth to meet the Bride* *Cant. 1. 7.*  
*callom* ] this speaks out their owning  
 effed seeking after Christ.

6. When they heard the cry of the  
 idegroom coming, *they arose, and* *Verse 7.*  
 mmed their lamps; they profess Christ  
 ore highly, hoping now to go in  
 at with the Bridegroom.

7. *They sought for true grace* ] now,  
 then't we say, the desires of grace, are  
 omace? and so they are, if true and  
 ouinely, if sound and seasonable.

Why?



Why? loe here a desire of grace  
these Virgins, *give us of your Oyl.*

Verse 8.

It was a desire of true grace, but  
was not a true desire of grace; it  
was not true, because not timely; unsound  
as being unseasonable; it was too late

Their folly was in not taking Oyl  
when they took their Lamps; the  
time of seeking grace was when the  
came to Christ; it was too late to seek  
it when Christ came to them. They  
should have sought for that when they  
took up their profession; it was too  
late to seek it at the coming of the  
Bridegroom.

Verse 10.

And therefore *they were shut out*; and  
though they cry for entrance, *Lord,*

Verse 11.

*Lord, open to us*; yet the Lord Christ

Verse 12.

tells them, *I know you not.*

You see how far these Virgins go  
a profession of Jesus Christ, and how  
long they continue in it, even till the  
Bridegroom came; they go to the very  
doors of Heaven, and there (like the  
*Sodomites*) perish with their hands  
upon the very thresholds of glory.

They were *almost Christians*, and yet  
but *almost*: Almost saved, and yet perishing.

You that are professors of

God



Gospel of Christ, stand and tremble, if they that have gone beyond us, fall short of heaven, what shall become of us that fall short of them?

If they that are Virgins, that profess Christ, that have some faith in their profession, (such as it is) that have some fruit in their faith, that out-strip others, that seek Christ, that improve their profession, and suit themselves to their profession, say, that seek grace; if such as these be but *almost Christians*, Lord, what then are we?

If these two witnesses be not sufficient to prove the truth, and confirm the credit of the proposition:

Take a third, and that shall be from the Old Testament, *Isa. 58.2*. See what God saith of that people; he gives them a very high character for a choice people one would think.

*They seek me daily, they delight to know my way, as a Nation that did Righteousness, and forsook not the Ordinances of their God: they ask of me the Ordinances of Justice; they take delight in approaching to God.*

See how far these went; if God had not said they were rotten and unsound,

we should have took them for  
 Jer. 50. 8. *See Goats before the Flock,* and rank  
 them among the Worthies; pray  
 for them, and serve,

*They seek God.* ] Now this is the  
 proper Character of a true Saint;  
 they seek God. True Saints are called *se-*  
 Psal. 24. 6. *ers of God: This is the Generation*  
*of them that seek him, that seek thy face*  
*Jacob, or, O God of Jacob.*

Lo here a Generation of them that  
 seek God, and are not these the Saints  
 of God? Nay farther;  
 2. *They seek him daily.* ] Here's dili-  
 gence backed with continuance  
 day by day; that is, every day  
 from day to day. They did not see  
 him by fits and starts, nor in a time  
 of trouble and affliction only, as many do.  
 Lord, in trouble have they visited thee;  
 they poured out a prayer when thy cha-  
 stening was upon them, Isa. 26. 16. Man  
 when God visits them, then they visit  
 him, but not till then, when God  
 poureth out his Afflictions; then they  
 pour out their Supplications. This  
 is the Seamen's devotion; when the storm

Jon. 1. 5. *have brought them to their wits end,*  
*then they cry to the Lord in their trouble.*

Psa. 107. 27, 28. Many never cry to God till they are at their wits end; they never come to God for help, so long as they can help themselves.

But now these here whom God speaks of, are more zealous in their devotion; the others make a virtue of necessity, but these seem to make conscience of duty; for saith God, *They seek me daily.*

Sure this is (one would thinke) a Note of sincerity.

Job saith of the Hypocrite, *Will he alwayes call upon God?* Surely no; but Job 17. 1 now this people call upon God alwayes, *They seek him daily*, certainly these are no Hypocrites.

3. Saith God, *They delight to know my wayes.* ] Sure this frees them from the suspicion of hypocrisie; for Job 21. 14. *They say unto God, depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy wayes.*

4. *They are as a Nation that did righteousness.* ] Not only as a Nation that spake Righteousness, or knew Righteousness, or professed Righteousness, but as a Nation that did Righteousness, that practised nothing but what was just and right. They ap-

peared to the judgement of the world as good as the best.

5. *They forsook not the Ordinances of their God* ] they seem true to their principles, constant to their profession, better than many among us, that call off duties, and forsake the Ordinances of God; but these hold out in their profession, *They forsook not the Ordinances of God.*

6. *They ask of me* (saith God) *the Ordinances of Justice* ] they will not make their own will the rule of right and wrong, but the Law and Will of God; and therefore in all their dealings with men, they desire to be guided and counselled by God. *They ask of me the Ordinances of Justice.*

7. *They take delight in approaching to God.* ] Sure this can't be the guise of an hypocrite; *will he delight himself in the Almighty?* saith Job: no, he will not.

Though God is the chief delight of man, (having every thing in him to render him lovely, as was said of *Titus Vespasian*) yet the hypocrite will not delight in God.

Till the affections are made spiritual, there

Job 27. 10

delicia

humani

eneris.

hypocrita

neque De-

um neque

humana ha-

bit in deli-

ciis.

there is no affection to things that are spiritual. God is a spiritual good, and therefore hypocrites cannot delight in God. But these are a people that delight in approaching to God. *John 8.* They were a people that were much in fasting, as you may see, *v. 3.* *wherefore have we fasted (say they) and thou seest not?* Now this is a duty that doth not suppose and require truth of grace only in the heart, but strength of grace.

*N*, man (saith our Lord Christ) *puts* *Mat. 9. 17*  
*new wine into old bottles, lest the bottles*  
*break, and the wine run out.*

New wine is strong, and old bottles weak; and the strong wine breaks the weak vessel: this is a reason Christ gives why his Disciples who were newly converted, (and but weak as yet) were not exercised with this austere discipline.

But this people here mentioned, were a people that fasted often, *Assembl.*  
*fasted their souls much, wore them-* *Annot.*  
*selves out by frequent practices of hu-* *upon the*  
*miliation.* *place.*

Sure therefore this *was new wine in*  
*new bottles*; this must needs be a people  
strong

strong in grace; here seems to be grace not only in truth, but also in growth. And yet for all this they were no better than a Generation of Hypocrites; they made a goodly progress, and went far, but yet they went not far enough; they were cast off by God after all. I hope by this time the truth of the point is sufficiently avouched and confirmed; that a man may be (yea very many are) almost, and yet (no more than) but almost Christians.

Now for the more distinct prosecution of the point.

1. I shall shew you step by step, how far a man may go, while attainments be may reach unto, how precious and singular a progress he may make in Religion, and yet be but almost a Christian when all is done.

2. I will shew you whence it is, that many men go so far, that they are almost Christians.

3. Why they are but almost Christians when they have gone thus far.

4. What the reason is, why men that go thus far as to be almost Christians, yet go no further than to be almost Christians.

1. How



How far a man may go in the way Quest.  
to heaven, and yet be but almost a Christian?

This I shall shew you in twenty several steps. *Answer.*

1. A man may have much knowledge, much light, he may know much of God and his will, much of Christ and his ways, and yet be but almost a Christian.

For though there can be no grace without knowledge, yet there may be much knowledge where there is no grace; illumination often goes before, when conversion never follows after. The subject of knowledge is the understanding, the subject of holiness is the will. Now a man may have his understanding enlightened, and yet his will not at all sanctified. He may have an understanding to know God, and yet want a will to obey God. The Apostle tells us of some, that when they knew God, yet they glorified him not as God, *Rom. 1. 21*

To make a man altogether a Christian, there must be light in the head, & heat in the heart; knowledge in the understanding, and zeal in the affections.

Some have zeal and no knowledge, *C. 4.* that



that is blind devotion; some have knowledge and no zeal, that is fruitless speculation. But where knowledge is joyned with zeal, that makes a true Christian.

**Object.** But is it not said, *This is life eternal to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent?* Joh. 17. 3.

**Sol.** It is not every knowledge of God and Christ that interests the soul in life eternal. For why then do the Devils perish? they have more knowledge of God than all the men in the world; for though by their fall they lost their holiness, yet they lost not their knowledge.

They are called *Devils*, from their knowledge; and yet they are *Devils* from their malice, Devils still.

Knowledge may fill the head, but it will never better the heart, if there be not somewhat else. The Pharisees had much knowledge; Behold thou art called a Jew, and reatest in the Law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, &c. and yet they were a generation of hypocrites.

Alas, how many have gone loaded with knowledge to hell?

Though

Rom. 2.  
17, 18.

Sinite sapientes  
bui mundi  
sapientes  
descender  
ad infer-

Though it is true, that it is life eternal, to know God and Jesus Christ; yet it is as true, that many do know God and Jesus Christ, that shall never see life eternal.

There is, you must know, a twofold knowledge; one is common, but not saving; the other is not common, but saving; common knowledge is that which floats in the head, but doth not influence nor affect the heart. This knowledge reprobates may have: Balaam saw Christ from the top of the Rocks, and from the Hills.

Numb. 23.  
10.

Naturalists say, that there is a pearl in the Toads head, and yet her belly is full of poyson. The French have a Berry which they call *uve de spine*, the Grape of a Thorn.

The common knowledge of Christ is the pearl in the Toads head, the Grape that grows upon Thorns, it may be found in men unsanctified.

And then there is a saving knowledge of God and Christ, which doth include the assent of the mind, and the consent of the will; this is a knowledge that implies faith; By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.

Isa. 53. 11.

And this is that knowledge, which leads to eternal life: Now whatever the measure of knowledge is, which a man may have of God, and of Jesus Christ, yet if it be not this saving knowledge, knowledge joyned with affection and application, he is but almost a Christian.

He only knows God aright, who knows how to obey him, and obey according to his knowledge of him. *A good understanding have all they that do his Commandments.*

*Psal. 111.  
10.*

All knowledge without this, makes a man but like *Nebuchadnezzars* image, with a head of gold, & feet of clay.

Some know, but to know.

Some know, to be known.

Some know, to practise what they know.

Now to know, but to know, that's curiosity.

To know, to be known, that's vain-glory.

But to know, to practise what we know, that is Gospel-duty.

This makes a man a compleat Christian; the other without this makes a man almost, and yet but almost a Christian.

2. A man may have great and eminent gifts, yea spiritual gifts, and yet be but almost a Christian. The gift of prayer is a spiritual gift; now this a man may have, and yet be but almost a Christian, for the gift of prayer is one thing, the grace of prayer is another.

The gift of preaching and prophesying is a spiritual gift, now this a man may have, and yet be but almost a Christian. Judas was a great Preacher, so were they that came to Christ, and said, *Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name cast out Devils, &c.*

1 Cor. 12.  
10.

Mat. 7. 22.

You must know that it is not gifts, but grace, which makes a Christian.

1. Gifts are from a common work of the Spirit; now a man may partake of all the common gifts of the Spirit, and yet be a Reprobate; for therefore they are called common, because they are indifferently dispensed by the Spirit to good and bad; to them that are believers, and to them that are not.

They that have grace, have gifts; and they that have no grace, may have the same gifts; for the Spirit works

in both; nay in this sense, he that has no grace may be under a greater weight of the Spirit (*quo ad hoc*) as to nothing, than he that hath most grace: a graceless professor may have greater gifts, than the most holy believer. He may out-pray, and out-preach, and out-do them; but they in sincerity and integrity out-go him.

2. Gifts are for the use and good of others, they are given *in ordine ad alium*, as the School-men speak, for the profiting and edifying of others; saies the Apostle, 1 Cor. 12. 7. *They are given to profit withall.*

Now a man may edifie another with his gifts, and yet be unedified himself. He may be profitable to another, and yet unprofitable to himself.

A lame man may with his Crutch point to thee the right way, and yet not be able to walk in it himself; a crooked Taylor may make a suit fit a straight body, though it fit not him that made it, because of his crookedness.

The Church (Christs gardens included) may be watered through a wooden gutter; the Sun may give light through

Eph. 4. 12.  
*Dona dantur in adiutorium gratiae.*

The Raven was an unclean bird, yet God makes use of her to feed Elijah; though she was not good meat yet it was good meat she brought.

1 Kin. 17. 6

through a fluttish window; and the field may be well sowed with a dirty hand.

The efficacy of the Word doth not depend upon the authority of him that speaks it, but upon the authority of the God that blesses it. So that another may be converted by my preaching, and yet I may be a *castaway* notwithstanding. *Balaam* makes a clear and rare prophesie of Christ, and yet he hath no benefit by Christ; *There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel.* But yet *Balaam* shall have no benefit by it; *I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh,* Num. 24. 17.

God may use a mans gifts to bring another unto Christ, when he himself, whose gifts God uses, may be a stranger unto Christ; one man may confirm another in the faith, and yet himself may be a stranger to the faith. *Pendleton* strengthens and confirms *Saunders*, Mon. last in *Queen Maries* dayes, to stand in the truth he had Preached, and to seal it with his blood, and yet afterwards plays the Apostate himself.

*Sculetus* tells us of one *Johannes Speiserus*,

Acts and  
Mon. last  
Edit. 3.  
vol. p. 141.



Sculter.

Annal. p.  
118.

*Speiserus*, a famous Preacher of *Augsburgh* in *Germany*, in the year 1523, who preached the Gospel so powerfully, that divers common *Harlots* were converted, and became good Christians, and yet himself afterwards turned Papist, and came to a miserable end.

Thus the candle may burn bright to light others in their Work, and yet afterwards go out in a stink.

3. It is beyond the power of the greatest gifts to change the heart; a man may preach like an Apostle, pray like an Angel, and yet may have the heart of a Devil. It is grace only that can change the heart; the greatest gifts can't change it, but the least grace can; gifts may make a man a Scholar, but grace makes a man a believer.

Now if gifts can't change the heart, then a man may have the greatest gifts and yet be but *almost a Christian*.

4. Many have gone loaden with gifts to hell; no doubt *Judas* had great gifts, for he was a Preacher of the Gospel; and our Lord Jesus Christ would not set him in the work, and not fit him for the work; yet *Judas* is gone



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his own place; the Scribes and Pha- 1 Cor. 1.  
sars were men of great gifts, and yet 20.

here is the wise? where is the Scribe?

The Preaching of the cross, is to them and 1: 18.  
a perill, foolishness.

Them that perish, who are they?

Who? the wise and the learned, both a-

mong Jews and Greeks, these are called

them that perish. *Surgunt indocti & va-*

*rum caelum, dum nos cum doctrina nostra*

*Gehennam descendimus*, said a great

bishop, when he saw a poor shepherd

creeping over a Toad. The poor illite-

rate world attain to heaven, while we

with all our learning fall into hell.

There are three things must be done

for us, if ever we would avoid perish-

ing.

We must be thoroughly convinced of

sin.

We must be really united unto

Christ.

We must be instated in the Cove-

nant of grace.

Now the greatest gifts cannot stand

in any one of these.

They cannot work through con-

victions.

They cannot effect our union.

They

They cannot bring us into Constant-relation.

And consequently they cannot preserve from eternal perishing; and if then a man may have the greatest gifts and yet be but almost a Christian.

5. Gifts may decay and perish; they do not lye beyond the reach of corruption; indeed Grace shall never perish, but Gifts will; Grace is incorruptible, though Gifts are not; Grace is *a spring whose waters fail not*, but streams of Gifts may be dried up. Grace be corruptible in its own nature, as being but a creature, yet it is incorruptible in regard of its conserver, being the new creature; he that create it in us, will conserve it for us. he that did begin it, will also finish it.

Gifts have their root in nature, but Grace hath its root in Christ; and therefore though Gifts may dye and wither yet Grace shall abide for ever.

Now if Gifts are perishing, then (though he that hath the *least* grace is a Christian, yet) he that hath the *greatest* gifts, may be but almost a Christian.

Object.

But doth not the Apostle bid us *covet earnestly the best gifts*? 1 Cor.

Why must we covet them, and  
 covet them earnestly, if they avail not  
 salvation?

Gifts are good, though they are not *Ans.*  
 the best good; they are excellent, but  
 there is somewhat more excellent; so  
 follows in the same verse, yet I shew  
 unto you a more excellent way, and that  
 the way of Grace; one dram of grace  
 more worth than a Talent of Gifts;  
 Gifts may make us rich towards men,  
 but it is Grace that makes us rich to-  
 wards God. *Luk. 12. 31*

Our Gifts profit others, but Grace  
 profits our selves; that whereby I pro-  
 fit another is good, but that whereby  
 I am profited my self is better.

Now because Gifts are good, there-  
 fore we ought to covet them; but be-  
 cause they are not the best good;  
 therefore we ought not to rest in them;  
 we must covet Gifts for the good of  
 others, that they may be edified;  
 and we must covet Grace for the good  
 of our own souls, that they may be  
 saved; for whosoever be bettered by  
 our Gifts, yet we shall miscarry with-  
 out Grace.

3. A man may have a high profession  
 of

of Religion, be much in external  
of godliness, and yet be but almost a Ch-  
stian. Mark what our Lord Christ  
them in Mat. 7. 21. Not every one  
saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter  
the Kingdom of heaven; that is,  
every one that makes a profession  
Christ, shall therefore be owned  
a true Disciple of Christ. All are  
Rom. 9. 6. Israel that are of Israel, nor are  
Christians, that make a profession  
Religion.

What a goodly profession had Judas  
he followed Christ, left all for Christ,  
he preached the Gospel of Christ,  
cast out Devils in the name of Christ,  
he eat and drank at the table of Christ,  
and yet Judas was but an hypocrite.  
Most professors are like Lillies,  
in shew, but foul in scent; or like pe-  
per, hot in the mouth, but cold in  
stomach. The finest lace may be upon  
the coarsest cloth.

It is a great deceit to measure  
substance of our Religion, by the  
of our profession; and to judge of  
strength of our graces, by the length  
of our duties. The Scriptures speak  
of some, who having a form of godliness

any theophorers thereof. Deny they Tim. 3. 5  
 a Corner, that is, they don't live in the  
 office of those graces which they  
 pretend to in their duties; he that  
 pretends to godliness by a specious  
 profession, and yet doth not practise  
 himself by a holy conversation, he  
 is a form, but denies the power.

High compares such to the Ostrich, *Loquimur  
 alas habet, sed non volat*, which *hic ut Pise,  
 vivet ut  
 Gallina.*  
 has great wings, but yet flies not;

they have the wings of a fair professi-  
 on, but yet use them not to mount  
 up in spiritual affections; and a  
 heavenly conversation.

But to clear the truth of this, that a  
 man may make a high profession of  
 Religion, and yet be but almost a  
 Christian, take a four-fold evidence.

1. If a man may profess Religion,  
 and yet never have his heart changed;  
 his state bettered; then he may be  
 a great professor, and yet be but almost  
 a Christian.

2. But a man may profess Religion,  
 and yet never have his heart changed;  
 his state renewed.

3. He may be a constant hearer of the  
 word, and yet be a sinner still; he  
 may

may come often to the Lords  
and yet go away a sinner as he  
we must not think that duties,  
operato, can confer Grace.

Many a soul hath been converted  
by Christ in an Ordinance, but  
was any soul converted by an Or-  
dinance without Christ.

And doth Christ convert all that  
under the Ordinances? surely no  
2 Cor. 2. 16 to some, the word is a savour of  
unto death.

And if so, then it is plain that a  
man may profess Religion, and yet be  
almost a Christian.

3. A man may profess Religion,  
live in a form of Godliness, in Hi-  
crisie, Isa. 48. 1. Hear ye this, O  
of Jacob, which are called by the name  
Israel, and are come forth out of the  
waters of Judah, which swear by the  
name of the Lord, and make mention of  
God of Israel, but not in truth,  
in righteousness. What do ye  
of these? They make mention of  
the name of the Lord, there is their  
profession; but not in truth, nor in  
sincerity; there is their dissimulation  
and indeed there could be no

in a religious sense, were it not  
a profession of Religion, for he  
is wicked, and carnal, and vile  
hardly, and appears to be so out-  
wardly, he is no hypocrite, but is  
as he appears, and appears what  
he is.

But he that is one thing really, and  
another thing seemingly, is carnal and  
vile, and yet seems to be good and  
pious, he is an hypocrite.

Thus the *Cajus* define hypocrite

to be *simulatio sanctitatis*, a counter-  
feiting of holiness, and this fits ex-  
actly with the Greek word *ὁμοκρίτης*,  
which is from *ὁμο* (homo) to counter-

And to this purpose, the Hebrews

use two words for hypocrites, *Panim*,  
which signifies *faces*, and *Chanephim*,  
which signifies *counterfeits*, from *Cha-*

ph, to dissemble, so that he is an hy-  
pocrite that dissembles Religion, and  
maketh the face of holiness, and yet

without the grace of holiness, he  
appears to be in semblance, what he is  
not in substance; he wears a form of  
holiness without, only as a cover of  
an impious heart within.

*Hypocrita  
cupit videri  
iustus.*

*Toller in-  
sit. Sa-  
cerd. l. 8.  
c. 9.*

פנים  
חנפים  
from the  
root  
חנף



He hath a *profession* that he may be thought wicked, but it is but a *profession*, and therefore he is wicked.

He is the Religious Hypocrite, because he pretends to be Religious, yet an Hypocrite, because he does not pretend to it; he is like many a Consumption, that have fresh and yet rotten Lungs: or like a man that hath a skin fair, but a heart coar; many appear righteous, but only righteous in appearance.

And if so, then a man may be Religious, and yet be but an Almost Christian.

2. Custom and fashion may make a man a professor; as you have seen men that wear this or that garb, not because it keeps them warmer, or for any excellency in it, more than another, but merely for fashion.

Many must have powdered and spotted faces, Feathers in their hats, &c. for no other end but because they would be fools in fashion.

So many profess Christianity because the means of grace warm their heart, or that they see any excellency in the ways of God above the

metely to follow the fashion; I  
might not say, it hath been true  
our dayes, because Religion hath  
been uppermost, therefore many have  
professed it; it hath been the gaining  
trade; and then most would be of that  
trade.

Religion in credit makes many  
professors; but few profelytes; but  
when Religion suffers, then its confes-  
sors are no more than its Converts, for  
Custom makes the former, but consci-  
ence the latter.

He that is a professor of Religion  
merely for custom sake when it pro-  
spers, will never be a Martyr for  
Christ sake when Religion suffers.

He that owns the truth to live upon  
that, will disown it when it comes to  
live upon him.

They say, that when a house is de-  
caying and falling, all the Rats and  
Mice will forsake it: while the house  
is firm, and they may shelter in the  
roof, they stay, but no longer, lest in  
the decay, the fall should be upon  
them, and they that lived at top,  
should lie at bottom.

My Brethren, may I not say, we  
have

have many that are the Vermin, Rats and Mice of Religion, that we live under the roof of it, while we might have shelter in it; but when it suffers, forsake it, lest it should fall, the fall should be upon them? I am perswaded this is not the least reason why God hath brought the wheel upon the profession of Religion, viz. to rid it of the Vermin.

He shakes the foundation of the house, that these Rats and Mice may quit the roof; not to overturn it, but to rid them out of it; as the Husbandman fans the Wheat, that he may be rid of the Chaff. The Halcyon of the Gospel provoke hypocrites, but the sufferings for Religion prove sincerity.

Now then if custom and fashion make many men professors, then a man may profess Religion, and yet be but almost a Christian.

4. If many may perish under a profession of godliness, then a man may profess Religion, and yet be but almost a Christian.

Now the Scripture is clear, that a man may perish under the high profession.

profession of Religion. Christ cursed the Fig-tree that had leaves and no fruit. It is said, Mat. 8. 12. That the Children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into utter darkness. Who were these, but they that were then the only people of God in the world, by profession, that had made a Covenant with him by sacrifice, Psa. 50. 5. and yet these cast out?

In Mat. 7. 22. you read of some that came and made boast of their profession to Christ, hoping that might save them. Lord (say they) have we not prophesied in thy name, cast out Devils in thy name, done many wonderful works in thy name?

Mat. 7. 22.

Now what saith our Lord Christ to this? Then I will profess unto them I never knew you, depart from me.

Verf. 23.

Mark, here are them that prophesie in his name, and yet perish in his wrath; in his name cast out Devils, and then are cast out themselves; in thy name do many wonderful works, and yet perish for wicked workers.

The profession of Religion, will no more keep a man from perishing, than calling a Ship a Safeguard, or the Good-speed, will keep her from drowning.

As many go to heaven with the tear of hell in their hearts, so many go to hell with the name of Christ in their mouths. Now then, if many may perish under a profession of Godliness, then may a man be a high professor of Religion, and yet be but *almost a Christian*.

*Object.*

Mat. 10.

But is it not said by the Lord Christ himself, *He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father in Heaven?*

Now for Christ to say he will confess us before the Father, is equivalent to a promise of eternal life; for if Jesus Christ confess us, God the Father will never disown us.

*Sol.*

True, they that confess Christ, shall be confessed by him; and it is as true, that this confession is equivalent to a promise of salvation. But, now you must know that professing Christ, is not confessing him; for to profess Christ is one thing, to confess Christ is another; confession is a living testimony for Christ, in a time when Religion suffers; profession may be only a lifeless formality, in a time when Religion prospers. To confess Christ, is to chuse his waies, and own them; to pro-

profess Christ is to plead for his waies, and yet live beside them. Profession may be from a feigned love to the wayes of Christ, but confession is from a rooted love to the person of Christ.

To profess Christ, is to own him when none deny him; to confess Christ, is to plead for him, and suffer for him, when others oppose him; hypocrites may be professors, but the Martyrs are the true confessors; Profession is a *swimming* down the stream, Confession is a swimming against the stream. Now many may swim with the stream (like the dead fish) that cannot swim against the stream with the living fish; many may profess Christ, that cannot confess Christ; and so notwithstanding their profession, yet are but *almost Christians*.

4. To come yet nearer; *A man may go far in opposing his sin, and yet be but almost a Christian*. How far a man may go in this work, I shall shew you in seven Gradual Instances.

First, *A man may be convinced of sin, and yet be but almost a Christian*: For;

1. Conviction may be rational as well as spiritual; it may be from a na-

tural conscience enlightened by the Word, without the effectual work of the spirit, applying sin to the heart.

2. Convictions may be worn out; they many times go off, and end not in sound conversion; saith the Church,  
 26. 18. *We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have brought forth wind.* This is the complaint of the Church, in reference to the unprofitableness of their afflictions, and it may be the complaint of most in reference to the unprofitableness of their convictions.

3. Many take convictions of sin to be conversion from thence, and so sit down and rest in their conviction. That is a sad complaint God makes of Ephraim, *Ephraim is an unwise Son, for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children.* Now then, if convictions may be only from natural conscience, if they may be worn out, or may be mistaken and rested in for conversion, then man may have convictions and be but almost a Christian.

Secondly, *A man may mourn for sin, and yet be but almost a Christian; so did Saul, so did Esau, for the loss of his birth-right, which was his sin, & therefore*



fore he is called by the spirit of God,  
*Prophane Esau*, yet he sought it again  
carefully *with tears*.

But doth not Christ pronounce *Object.*  
them blessed that mourn? *Mat. 5. 4.*  
*Blessed are they that mourn.*

Sure then if a man mourn for sin, he  
is in a good condition: you see, saith  
*Nazianzen*, το στεναγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας συν- *Orat. 1.*  
μνεσμένον, that salvation is joyned *Greg. N.*  
with sorrow.

I answer, It is true, that they who *Sol.*  
mourn for sin in the sense Christ there  
speaks of, are blessed; but all mourning  
for sin, doth not therefore render us  
blessed.

1. True mourning for sin, must flow  
from spiritual conviction of the evil, &  
vileness, and damnable nature of sin.

Now all that mourn for sin, don't  
do it from a through work of spiritual  
conviction upon the soul; they have  
not a right sense of the evil and vile-  
ness of sin.

2. True mourning for sin; is more  
for the evil that is in sin, than the evil  
that comes by sin; more because it  
dishonours God, and wounds Christ,  
and grieves the Spirit, and makes the  
D 3 soul

soul unlike God, than because it damns the soul.

Now there are many that mourn for sin, not so much for the evil that is in it, as for the evil that it brings with it; there is mourning for sin in Mt. 8. 12. Hell, you read of *weeping and wailing there*. The damned are weeping and mourning to eternity, there is all sorrow, and no comfort; as in Heaven there is peace without trouble, joy without mourning, so in Hell there is trouble without peace, mourning without joy, weeping and wailing incessantly; but it is for the evil they feel by sin, and not for the evil that is in sin. So that a man may mourn for sin, and yet be but *almost a Christian*; it may grieve him to think of perishing for sin, when it doth not grieve him that he is defiled and polluted by sin.

Thirdly, *A man may make large confession of sin, to God, to others, and yet be but almost a Christian.*

How ingenuously doth Saul confess his sin to David, *I have sinned* (saith he) *thou art more righteous than I! Behold I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly*. So

So Judas makes a full confession, I have sinned in betraying innocent blood. Mat. 27. 4.

Yet Saul and Judas were both rejected of God; so that a man may confess sin, and yet be but *almost a Christian*.

But is not confession of sin, a character of a Child of God? Doth not

the Apostle say, *If we confess our sins, God is just and faithful to forgive them?* 1 Joh. 1 9.

No man was ever kept out of Heaven for his confessed badness, though many are kept out of heaven for their supposed goodness.

Peccatorum confessio  
Synecdoche  
universam  
penitentiam  
hoc loco

*Judah* in Hebrew, signifies confession; now *Judah* got the Kingdom from *Reuben*; confession of sin is the way to the Kingdom of Heaven.

significat,  
Vult. in  
loc.

There are some that confess sin, and *Sol.* are saved; there are others that confess sin and perish.

1. Many confess sin meerly out of custome, and not out of conscience; you shall have many that will never pray, but they will make a long confession of sin, and yet never feel the weight or burden of it upon their consciences.

2. Many will confess lesser sins, and yet conceal greater; like the Patient

in *Plutarch*, that complained to his Physitian of his finger, when his Liver was rotten.

3. Many will confess sin in the general, or confess themselves sinners, and yet see little, and say less, of their particular sins; in amplicite confession (as one saith) is almost as bad as implicate faith.

Where confession is right, it will be distinct, especially of those sins that were our chief sins.

*Pfal. 51. 4, 14. 1 Tim. 1. 13, 19.* So *David* confesses his blood-guiltiness, and adultery; So *Paul*, his Blasphemy, persecution, and injury against the Saints. It is bad to hear men confess they are great sinners, and yet can't confess their sins.

Though the least sin be too bad to be committed, yet there is no sin too bad to be confessed.

4. Many will confess sin, but it is only under extremity, that is not free and voluntary; *Pharaoh* confesses his sin, but it was when judgement compelled him.

*I have sinned against the Lord*, saith he, but it was when he had had eight Plagues upon him.

Many

Many do by their sins, as Marriners do by their goods, cast them out in a storm, wishing for them again in a calm; confession should come like water out of a spring, which runs freely, not like water out of a still, which is forced by fire.

5. Many confess their sins, but with no intent to forsake sin; they confess the sins they have committed, but don't leave the sins they have *confessed*.

Many men use confession as *Lewis* the eleventh of *France* did his Crucifix; he would swear an Oath, and then kiss it, and swear again, and then kiss it again.

So, many sin, and then confess they do not well, but yet never strive to do better.

*Mr. Torskel* tells a story of a Minister he knew, that would be often drunk, and when he came into the Pulpit, would confess it very lamentingly; and yet no sooner was he out of the Pulpit, but he would be drunk again, and this would he do as constantly, as men follow their trades.

Now then, if a man may confess sin merely out of custome; if he may

confess lesser sins ; and yet conceal greater ; if he may confess sin only in the general, or only under extremity, or if he may confess sin without any intent to forsake sin, then surely a man may confess sin, and yet be but *almost a Christian*.

Fourthly, *A man may forsake sin, and yet be but almost a Christian* ; he may leave his lusts and wicked waies, which he sometimes lived in ; and in the judgement of the world become a new man, and yet not be a new creature. *Simon Magus* when he hears

*Act. 8. 13.* *Philip preaching concerning the Kingdom of God, leaves his sorcery and witchcraft, and believes.*

*Object.* But you'l say, this seems contrary to Scripture ; for that sayes, *He that*

*Prov. 28. 13.* *confesses and forsakes sin shall have mercy ; But I confess sin, yea, not only so, but I also forsake sin ; sure therefore his mercy is my portion, it belongs to me.*

*Sol.* It is true, that where the soul forsakes from a right principle, after a right manner, to a right end ; where he forsakes sin as sin, as being contrary to God, and the purity of his nature.

*This*

This declares that soul to be right with God, and the promise shall be made good to it, *He shall find mercy.*

But now pray mind, there is a forsaking sin that is not right, but unsound.

1. Open sins may be deserted, and yet secret sins may be retained; now this is not a right forsaking, such a soul shall never find mercy; A man may be cured of a wound in his flesh, and yet may dye of an imposthume in his bowels.

2. A man may forsake sin, but not as sin; for he that forsakes sin as sin, forsakes all sin; *A quatenus ad omne valet consequentia*: it is impossible for a man to forsake sin as sin, unless he forsakes all that he knows to be sin.

3. A man may let one sin go, to hold another the faster; as a man that goes to Sea, would willingly save all his goods, but if the storm arise that he cannot, then he throws some overboard to lighten the vessel, and save the rest. So did they, *Act. 27. 38.*

So the sinner chuses to keep all his sins, but if a storm arise in his conscience, why then he will leave one lust over-



over-board to save the life of another.

4. A man may let all sin go, and yet be a sinner still; for there is the root of all sin in the heart, though the fruit be not seen in the life; the tree lives, though the boughs be lopt off.

As a man is a sinner before ever he acts sin, so (till grace renew him) he is a sinner though he leaves sin; for there is original sin in him enough to  
Psa. 51. 5. damn and destroy him.

5. Sin may be left and yet be loved; a man may forsake the life of sin, and yet retain the love of sin; now, though leaving sin makes him almost a Christian; yet loving sin shews he is but almost a Christian.

It is a less evil to do sin and not love it, than to love sin and not to do it; for to do sin may argue only weakness of grace, but to love sin argues strength of lust; *What I hate, that do I*, Rom 7. 15.

Sin is bad in any part of man, but sin in the affection is worse than sin in the conversation; for sin in the conversation may be only from infirmity, but sin in the affection is the fruit of choice and unregeneracy.

6. All sin may be chained, and yet the

her heart not changed, and so the nature of the sinner is the same as ever. A dog chained up, is a dog still, as much as if it were loose to devour.

There may be a cessation of arms between enemies, and yet the quarrel may remain on foot still; there may be a making truce, where there is no making peace.

A sinner may lay the weapons of sin out of his hand, and yet the enmity against God still remain in his heart.

There may be a truce, he may not sin against him, but there can be no peace till he be united unto him.

Restraining grace holds in the Sinner, but it is renewing grace that changes the nature? Now many are held in by grace from being open Sinners, that are not renewed by grace, and made true believers.

Now then, if a man may forsake open sins, and retain secret sins; if he may forsake sin, but not as sin; if he may let one sin go, to hold another the faster; if a man may let all sin go, and yet be a sinner still; if sin may be left, and yet be loved; Finally, if all sin may be chained, and yet the heart not changed.

changed, than a man may forsake  
and yet be but *almost a Christian*.

Fifthly, *A man may hate sin, and  
be but almost a Christian.* Absalom  
2 Sam. 13: hated Ammons uncleanness with his  
22. ster Thamar, yea, his hatred was  
great, as that he slew him for it,  
yet Absalom was but a wicked man.

*Object.*

But the Scripture makes it a  
proof of a gracious heart to hate sin ;  
though a man do through infirmity  
fall into sin, yet if he hates it, this  
is a proof of grace. Paul proves the  
sincerity of his heart, and the truth  
of his grace, by this hatred of sin, though  
he committed it, Rom. 7. 15. *What  
I hate, that do I.*

*Sol.*

Nay, what is grace, but *conformitas  
cum archetypo*, a conformity of the  
soul to God, to love as God loves  
to hate as God hates ! now God hates  
sin ; it is one part of his holiness,  
he hates all sin.

And if I hate sin, then am I conformed  
to God, and if I am conformed to  
God, then am I altogether a Christian.

It is true, that there is a hatred of  
sin, which is a sign of grace, and which  
flows from a principle of grace, and  
is grace : As for instance,

To hate sin, as it is an offence to God, a wrong to his Majesty, to hate sin, as it is a breach of the Command, and so a wicked controuling Gods Will, which is the only rule of good-ness, to hate sin, as being a disingenuous transgression of that Law of love established in the blood and death of Christ, and so in a degree a crucifying of Christ afresh.

To hate sin as being a grieving and quenching the Spirit of God, as all sin in its nature is.

Thus to hate sin is grace; and thus every true Christian hates sin.

But though every man that hath grace, hates sin; yet every man that hates sin, hath not grace: For,

A man may hate sin from other principles, not as it is a wrong to God, or a wounding Christ, or a grieving the Spirit, for then he would hate all sin, for there is no sin but hath this in the nature of it: But,

1. A man may hate sin for the shame that attends it, more than for the evil that is in it. Some sinners there are who declare their sin, as Sodom, and hide it not. They are set down in the

Psa. 1. 1. the seat of the scornfull, they glory in their shame, Phil. 5. 19. But now others there are who are ashamed of sin, therefore hate it, not for the sins sake, but the shames sake. This man *Absalom* hate *Ammons* uncleanness, because it brought shame upon him and his Sister.

2. A man may hate sin more in others than in himself; so doth the Drunkard, he hates drunkenness in another, and yet practises it himself; the lyar hates falshood in another, but likes it in himself. Now he that hateth sin from a principle of grace, hateth it most in himself; he hates sin in others, but he loathes most the sins of his own heart.

3. A man may hate one sin, as being contrary to another. There is great contrariety between sin and holiness; between lust and chastity; It is the excellency of the life of grace, that it is a uniform life; there is no one grace contrary to another; the graces of Gods Spirit are different, but not differing; faith, and love, and holiness are all one; they consist together at the same time, in the same subject, may

they can't be parted; there can be no faith without love, no love without holiness; and so on the other hand, no holiness without love, no love without faith. So that this makes the life of grace an easie and excellent life; but now the life of sin is a-distracting contradictory life, wherein a man is a servant to contrary lusts; the lust of pride and prodigality, is contrary to the lust of covetousness, &c. Tit. 3. 3.

Now when one lust gets to be the Master-lust in the soul, then that works a hatred of its contrary; where covetousness gets the heart, there the heart hates pride; and where pride gets uppermost in the heart, there the heart hates covetousness. Thus a man may hate sin, not from a principle of grace, but from the contrariety of *lust*.

He don't hate any sin as it is sin, but he hates it as being contrary to his beloved sin.

Now then, if a man may hate sin for the shame that attends it; if he may hate sin more in others, than in himself; and if he may hate one sin as being contrary to another, then he may hate sin, and yet be but *almost a Christian*. Sixth-

Sixthly, *A man may make great vows and promises, he may have strong purposes and resolutions against sin, and yet be but almost a Christian.*

Thus did *Saul*, he promises and resolves against his sin, *Return my double,* *2 Sam. 16.* *David, saith he, for I will no more hurt thee harm.* What promises and resolutions did *Pharaoh* make against that sin of detaining Gods people? Saith he, *I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the Lord: And again, I will let ye go, and ye shall stay no longer: V Exodus. 9. 28.* And yet *Saul* and *Pharaoh* both perished in their sins: the greatest purposes and promises against sin will not make a man a Christian. For,

1. Purposes and promises against sin, never hurt sin; we say, *threaten* *folk live long*, and truly so do threatenings. It is not new purposes, but a new nature that must help us against sin; purposes may bring to the birth, but without a new nature, *there is no strength to bring forth.* The new nature is the best soyl for holy purposes to grow in; otherwise they wither and die, like plants in an improper soyl.

2. Trouble



Trouble and afflictions may pro-  
 us to large purposes and promi-  
 against sin for the future; what  
 re common than to vow, and not  
 pay; to make vows in the day of  
 trouble, which we make no conscience  
 more pay in the day of peace? Many co-  
 esolve against sin, when trouble is up-  
 sin on them; and then sin against their co-  
 he, when it is removed from them.  
 It was a brave rule that *Pliny* in one  
 of his *Epistles* gave his friend to live  
 long: *Ut tales esse perseveremus sani, qua-*  
*Phos nos futuros esse profiteamur infirmi;*  
 that we should continue to be such when  
 we are well, as we promise to be when we  
 are sick.

Many are our sick-bed promises,  
 but we are no sooner well, but we  
 grow sick of our promises.

3. Purposes and resolves against sin  
 for the future, may be only a tempta-  
 tion to put off repentance for the  
 but present; Satan may put a man on to  
 good purposes, to keep him from pre-  
 sumptuous attempts.

He knows whatever we purpose,  
 and yet the strength of performance is not  
 in our selves.

He

He knows that purposes for the future, are a putting God off for the present; they are a secret will not a present opportunity. That is a noble passage, *Luke 9. 59. Follow me,* Christ to the two men; Now see answers they give to Christ. *Saith first to go bury my Father,* saith this man purposes to follow Christ only he would stay to bury his Father. *Saith the other, Lord, I will follow thee but let me first go and bid them farewell which are at my house,* ver. 61. I follow thee, but only I would first and take my leave of my friends, set my house in order; and yet we not find that ever they followed Christ notwithstanding their fair purposes.

4. Nature unsanctified may be far wrought on, as to make great promises and purposes against sin.

1. A natural man may have great convictions of sin, from the workings of an enlightned conscience.

2. He may approve of the Law of God.

3. He may have a desire to be saved. Now these three together; The workings of conscience; The fight

goodness of the Law ; A desire  
saved, may bring forth in a man  
purposes against sin, and yet he  
have no heart to perform his  
purposes. This was much-what  
case of them, *Deut. 5.* say they to  
verse 27. *Go thou near and hear*  
*that the Lord our God shall say, and*  
*thou it to us, and we will hear it, and*

This is a fair promise, and so God  
said it, *v. 28.* *I have heard the words of*  
*your people, they have well said all that*  
*you have spoken.* So said, and so done,  
been well ; but it was better said  
done ; for though they had a  
guage to promise, yet they had no  
heart to perform ; and this God saw,  
therefore said he, *v. 29.* *O that there*  
*were such a heart in them, that they*  
*should fear me, and keep my Command-*  
*ments alwayes, that it might be well with*  
*them!*

They promise to fear God and keep  
Commandments, but they wanted  
new heart to perform what an un-  
sanctified heart had promised. It fares  
with men in this case, as it did with  
that Son in the Gospel, that said, *He*  
*would*

Mar. 21. *would go into the Vineyard, but would not*

30. Now then if purposes and promises against sin, never hurt sin; if persecutions may draw out large promises, if they may be the fruit of temptation, or if from nature unsanctified; then a man may promise and purpose much against sin, and yet be but *a Christian*,

Seventhly, *A man may maintain strife and combat against sin in his heart, and yet be but almost a Christian.* So

Balaam, when he went to curse the people of God, he had a great

Numb. 23. *within himself; How shall I*

8. *(saith he) where God hath not cursed, Or how shall I desire, whom the Lord hath not desired?*

And did not Pilate strive against sin, when he said to the Jews, *Shall*

Mark 15. *crucify your King? What evil hath*

12, 14. *done? I am innocent of the blood of this*

Mar. 27. *just man.*

24. Object. But you will say, *Is not this an*

*argument of grace, when there is a strife in the soul against sin? for what shall oppose sin in the heart but grace? The*

Apostle makes the lusting of the

Gal. 5. 17. *against the Spirit, and the Spirit against*

*flesh*, to be an argument of grace in the heart. Now I find this strife in my heart; though the remainders of corruption sometimes break out into actual sins, yet I find a striving in my soul against sin.

It is true, there is a striving against *Sol.* sin which is only from grace, and is proper to believers; and there is a striving against sin, which is not from grace, and therefore may be in them that are not believers.

There is a strife against sin in one and the same faculty; the will against the will; the affection against the affection, and this is that which the Apostle calls *the lusting of the flesh against the Spirit*; that is, the striving of the unregenerate part against the regenerate, and this is ever in the same faculty, and is proper to believers only.

An unbeliever never finds this strife in himself, this strife cannot be in him, it is impossible (as such) that is, while he is on this side a state of Grace.

But then there is a striving against sin in divers faculties, and this is the strife that is in them that are not believers; there the strife is between the will

*Vide me-  
lior: pro-  
bo, De-  
riora se-  
quor.*

will and the conscience ; Conscience enlightned and terrified with the thoughts of hell and damnation, that is against sin ; the will and affection (not being renewed ) they are for sin. And this causes great tuggings and strong combats many times in the sinners heart.

Thus it was with the *Scribes and Pharisees* ; conscience convinced them of the Divinity of Christ, and of the truth of his being the Son of God ; yet a perverse will, and carnal affections cry out, *Crucifie him, Crucifie him*.

Conscience pleaded for him, he had a witness in their bosomes, and yet their wills were bent against him, and therefore they are said to *have resisted the Spirit* ; viz. the workings and convictions of the Spirit in their consciences, *Act. 7. 51*. And this is the case of many sinners, when will and affections are for sin, and plead for it ; conscience is against it, and many times frights the soul from the doing of it.

And hence men take that which opposes sin in them to be Grace, when it is only the work of a natural conscience ; they conclude the strife is between Grace and sin, the regenerate

and unregenerate part, when alas it is no other than the contention of a natural conscience against a corrupt will and affection.

And if so, then a man may have great strifes and combats against sin in him, and yet be but *almost a Christian*.

5. *A man may desire grace, and yet be but almost a Christian*; so did the five foolish Virgins, Mat. 25. 8. Give us of your oyl; what was that but true grace? it was that oyl that lighted the wise Virgins into the Bridegrooms Chamber.

They do not only desire to enter in, but they desire oyl to light them in; wicked men may desire Heaven, desire a Christ to save them; there is none so wicked upon earth, but desire to be happy in heaven.

But now here are they that desire grace as well as glory, and yet these are but *almost Christians*.

But is it not commonly taught, that Object. desires of grace are grace? nay, doth not our Lord Christ himself make it so? Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after *righteousness, for they shall be filled.* Mat. 5. 6.

It is true, that there are some de- *Sol.*  
E fires



fires of grace, which are grace: As,

1. When a man desires grace from a right sense of his natural state; when he sees the vileness of Sin, and the woful, defiled, and loathsome condition he is in, by reason of Sin, and therefore desires the grace of Christ to renew and change him; this is Grace. This some make to be the lowest degree of saving faith.

2. When a man joyns proportionable endeavours to his desires; doth not only wish for Grace, but work for Grace, such desires are Grace.

3. When a mans desires are constant and uncessant, that cease not but in the attainment of their object, such desires are true Grace. They are a part of the especial work of the Spirit. They do really partake of the nature of Grace; now it is a known Maxim, *Quicquid participat de natura totius, est pars totius*: That which partakes of the nature of the whole, is a part of the whole; the filings of gold, are gold. The Sea is not more really water than the least drop; the flame is not more really fire than the least spark; for these do *participare de natura totius*.

But though all true desires of grace, are grace; yet all desires of grace are not true: For,

1. A man may desire grace, but not for it self, but for somewhat else; not grace for graces sake, but for heavens sake; He don't desire grace, that his nature may be changed, his heart renewed, the Image of God stamp't upon him, and his lusts subdued in him.

These blessed desires are found only in true believers. The true Christian only can desire grace for graces sake; but the almost Christian may desire grace for heavens sake.

2. A man may desire grace without proportionable endeavours after grace; many are good at wishing, bad at working: Like him that lay in the grass on a Summers day, crying out, *O si hoc esset laborare*: *O that this were to work!*

Solomon saith, the desire of the fleshful kills him: How so? For his hands refuse to labour, Prov. 21. 25. He perisheth in his desires.

The believer joyns desires and endeavours together; One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that I will seek after, Psal. 27. 4.

*Impii non  
curant  
querere  
quem  
men  
derant in-  
venire, cu-  
pientes  
consequi,  
sed non  
siqui. Ber.  
Eccl. 8.5.*

*Sero sapi-  
unt Phy-  
ges.*

3. A mans desires of grace may be unseasonable; thus the foolish Virgins desired oyl when it was too late.

The believers desires are seasonable; he desires grace in the season of grace, and seeks in a time when it may be found. *The wise mans heart knows both time and judgement.* He knows his season, and hath wisdom to improve it.

The silly Sinner doth all his works out of season; he sins away the seasons of grace, and then desires grace when the season is over; the Sinner doth all too late, as Esau desired the blessing when it was too late, and therefore he lost it, whereas, had he come sooner, he had obtained it.

Most men are like *Epimetheus*, wise too late, they come when the Market is done, when God hath shut in shop, then they have oyl to get.

When they lie upon their death-beds, then they desire holy hearts.

4. Desires of grace in many are very inconstant and fleeting, like the morning dew that quickly passes away: Or like *Jonahs Gourd*, that springs up in a night, and withers in a night; they have no root in the heart, and there-

fore quickly perish: Now then, if a man may desire grace; but not for graces sake; if desires may be without endeavours; if a man may desire grace when 'tis too late; if these desires may be but fleeting and inconstant, then may a man desire grace, and yet be but *almost a Christian*.

6. *A man may tremble at the Word of God, and yet be but almost a Christian, as Belsbazar did at the hand-writing* Dan. 5. 6. *upon the wall.*

But is not that a note of Sincerity Object. and truth of grace, to tremble at the Word? doth not God say, *To him will I look, that is of a poor and contrite spirit, and trembles at my Word?* Isa. 66. 21.

There is a twofold trembling:

1. One is, when the Word discovers the guilt of Sin, and the wrath of God that belongs to that guilt; this where conscience is awake, causes trembling and amazement; thus when Paul preached of righteousness and judgment, it is said, *Felix trembled.* Act. 24. 25.

2. There is a trembling which arises from a holy dread, and reverence of the Majesty of God, speaking in his Word; this is only found in true believers,

lievers, and is that which keeps the soul low in its own eyes. Therefore mark how the words run in *Isa. 66. 2.*

*To him will I look that is of a poor and contrite spirit, and trembles at my Word.*

God don't make the promise to him that trembles at the Word; for the Devils believe and tremble; the Word of God can make the proudest, stoutest sinner in the world to shake and tremble; but it is *to the poor and contrite spirit that trembles*: Where trembling is the fruit of a spirit broken for sin, and low in its own eyes, there will God look.

Now many tremble at the Word; but not from poverty of spirit, not from a heart broken for sin, and low in its own eyes; not from a sense of the Majesty and holiness of God, and therefore notwithstanding they tremble at the Word, yet they are but *almost Christians*.

7. *A man may delight in the Word and Ordinances of God, and yet be but almost a Christian*: *Isa. 58. 2.* They take delight in approaching to God.

And it is said of that ground, *Mat. 13. 20.* that it received the Word with joy, and yet it was but stony ground.

But

But is it not made a character of a Object. godly man, to delight in the Word of God? Doth not *David* say, *He is a* Psal. 1. 2. *blessed man that delights in the Law of the Lord?*

There is a delighting in the Word, *Sol.* which flows from grace, and is a proof of blessedness.

1. He that delights in the Word because it is spiritual, he is a Christian indeed; the more spiritual the Ordinances are, the more doth a gracious heart delight in them.

2. When the word comes close to the conscience, rips up the heart, and discovers sin, & yet the soul delights in it notwithstanding, this is a sign of *grace*.

3. When delight arises from that communion that is to be had with God there; this is from a principle of Grace in the soul.

But there may be a delight in the Word, where there is no Grace.

1. There are many delight in the Word, because of the Eloquence of the Preacher; they delight not so much in the truths delivered, as in the dress they are delivered in. Thus it is said of the Prophet *Ezekiel*, that he



Ezek. 33. was to them as a very lovely song of  
32. that hath a pleasant voice.

2. There are very many delight to hear the Word, that yet take no delight to do it; so saith God of them, in Ezek. 33. 32. *They delight to hear my*

Ezek. 33. *words, but they do them not.*

32. Now then, if a man may delight in the Word, more because of the Eloquence of the Preacher, than because of the spiritualness of the matter; if he may delight to hear the Word, and yet not delight to do it; then he may delight in the Word, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

8. *A man may be a Member of the Church of Christ, he may joyn himself to the people of God, partake with them in all Ordinances, and share of all Church-priviledges, and yet be but almost a Christian.*

So the five foolish Virgins; joyned themselves to the wise, and walked together.

Many may be Members of the Church of Christ, and yet not Members of Christ the Head of the Church.

There was a mixed multitude came up with the Church of Israel out of Egypt,



Egypt, they joynd themselves to the Israelites, owned their God, left their own Country, and yet in heart Egyptians notwithstanding.

All are not Israel that are of Israel, Rom. 9. 6.

The Church in all Ages hath had unsound members; Cain had communion with Abel, Ishmael dwelt in the same house with Isaac, Judas was in fellowship with the Apostles, and so was Demas with the rest of the Disciples.

There will be some Bran in the finest Meal; the Draw-net of the Gospel catches bad fish as well as good; the Tares and the Wheat grow together, and it will be so till the harvest.

And hath a Church, where there are no members but such as are true members of Christ, but it is in heaven, it is the Church of the First-born; there are no hypocrites, no rotten, unsound professors, none but the spirits of just men made perfect; all is pure Wheat that God layeth up in that Garner; there the Chaff is separated to unquenchable fire.

Heb. 12.

23.

Mat. 3. 12.

But in the Church on earth, the

Wheat and the Chaff lie in the same heap together; the *Samaritans* will be near of kin to the *Jews* when they are in prosperity; so while the Church of God flourisheth in the world, many will joyn to it; they will seem *Jews*, though they are *Samaritans*; and seem *Saints*, though yet they are no better than *almost Christians*.

9. A man may have great hopes of Heaven, great hopes of being saved, and yet be but almost a Christian.

Indeed there is a hope of Heaven, Heb. 6. 19. which is the anchor of the Soul, sure and stedfast; it never miscarries, and it is known by four properties.

First, It is a hope which purifies the heart, purges out sin, 1 Joh. 3. 3. He that hath this hope, purifies himself, even as God is pure. That soul that truly hopes to enjoy God, truly endeavours to be like God.

Secondly, It is a hope which fills the heart with gladness; We rejoyce in hope of the glory of God. Rom. 5. 2.

Thirdly, It is a hope that is founded upon the promise; as there can be no true faith without a promise, so, nor any true hope; faith applies the promise,

mise, and hope expects the fulfilling the promise; faith relies upon the truth of it, and hope waits for the good of it; faith gives interest, hope expects livery and seisin.

Fourthly, It is a hope that is wrought by God himself in the Soul; who is therefore called, *The God of hope*, as *Rom. 15.* being the *Author* as well as the *Object* <sup>13.</sup> of hope. Now he that hath this hope shall never miscarry: This is a right hope, the hope of the true believer, *Christ in you the hope of glory.* *Col. 1. 27.*

But then, as there is a true and sound hope, so there is a false and rotten hope; and this is much more common, as bastard-pearls are more frequently worn than true pearls.

There is nothing more common than to see men big with groundless hopes of Heaven: As,

1. A man may have great hope, that hath no grace; you read of the hope of hypocrites, *Job 8. 13, 14.*

The performance of duties is a *proof* of their hope; the foolish Virgins would never have done what they did, had they thought they should have been shut out after all.

Many

Many professors would not be such pains in duties as they are, if they did not hope for heaven. Hope is the great motive to action; despair cuts the sinews of all endeavours; this is one reason why the damned in hell cease acting toward an alteration of their state, because despair hath taken hold of them; if there were any hope in hell, they would up and be doing there. So that there may be great hopes where there is no grace; experience proves this; formal professors are men of no Grace, but yet men of great hopes; nay, many times you shall find that none fear more about their eternal condition, than they that have most cause of hope; and none hope more, than they that have most cause of fear. As interest in God may sometimes be without hope, so hope in God may be without interest.

2. A man may hope in the mercy, and goodness, and power of God, without eying the promise, and this is the hope of most; God is full of mercy and goodness, and therefore willing to save; and he is infinite in power, and therefore able to save; why therefore

therefore should I not rest on him?

Now it is presumption, and therefore sin, to hope in the mercy of God, otherwise than by eying the promise; for the promise is the channel of mercy, the pipe through which it is conveyed; all the blessedness the Saints enjoy in Heaven, is no other than what is the fruit of the promise relyed on, and hoped for here on earth. A man hath no warrant to hope in God, but by virtue of the promise.

3. A man may hope for Heaven, and yet not cleanse his heart, nor depart from his secret sins; that hope of salvation that is not accompanied with heart-purification, that is a vain hope.

4. A man may hope for Heaven, and yet be doing the work of hell; he may hope for salvation, and yet be working out his own damnation, and so perish in his confidences. This is the case of many, *Male agendo sperant, & sperando pereunt*; like the Water-man, that looks one way, and rows another; many have their eyes on heaven, whose hearts are in the earth; they hope in God, but chuse him not for a portion; they hope in God, but do not love him

him as the best good, and therefore are like to have no portion in him, nor good by him; but are like to perish without him, notwithstanding all their hopes, *Job 27. 8. What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God takes away his soul?*

Now then, if a man may have great hope of heaven, that hath no grace, if he may hope in mercy, without eying the promise; if he may hope without heart-purifying; if he may hope for heaven, and yet do the work of hell; surely then a man may have great hopes of heaven, and yet be but almost a Christian.

10. *A man may be under great and visible changes, and these wrought by the Ministry of the Word, and yet be but almost a Christian; as Herod was, it is said, when he heard John Baptist, he did many things, and heard him gladly. Saul was under a great change; when he met the Lords Prophets, he turned Prophet too.*

Mar. 6. 30.  
10.

Nay, it is said, *v. 9. of that 1 Sam. 10. that God gave him another heart.*

Now was not this a work of grace? and was not *Saul* here truly converted?



ed? one would think he was, but yet indeed he was not.

For though it is said, God gave him another heart, yet it is not said, that God gave him a *new heart*.

There is a great difference between *לב אחר* (*lebb acher*) another heart, and *לב חדש* (*lebb chadish*) a new heart: God gave him another heart to fit him for a Ruler, but gave him not a *new heart* to make him a believer; another heart may make another man; but it is a *new heart*, that makes a *new man*.

Again, *Simon Magus* is a great proof of this truth, he was under a great and visible change; of a *Sorcerer*, he was turned to a *Believer*; he left his Witchcrafts and Sorceries, and imbraced the *Gospel*; was not this a great change?

If the drunkard doth but leave his drunkenness, the swearer his oaths, the prophane person his prophaneess, they think this is a gracious change, and their state is now good; alas, *Simon Magus* did not only leave his sins, but had a kind of conversion; for he *believed and was baptized*.

Act. 8. 13.

But is not that man that is changed a *Object* true *Christian*?

Not



So!

Not every change makes a man Christian; indeed there is a change that whoever is under it, he is a true Christian.

When a mans heart is so changed, as that it is renewed, when *old things* are *done away*, and *all is become new*, when the *καὶνὴ κτίσις*, the new creature is wrought in the soul; when a man is turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God; when the mind is enlightned, the will renewed, the affections made heavenly, then a man is a Christian indeed.

2Cor.5.17

Act.26.18

But now you must know that every change is not this change: For,

I. There is a civil change, a moral change, as well as a spiritual and supernatural change.

Many men are changed in a moral sense; and one may say, they are become *new men*, but they are in heart and nature the same men still: They are not changed in a spiritual and supernatural sense, and therefore it cannot be said of them, they are become *new creatures*.

Restraining grace may cause a moral change, but it is renewing grace that

that must cause a saving change. Now many are under restraining grace, and so changed morally, that are not under the power of renewing grace, and so changed savingly.

2. There is an outward change, as well as an inward change; the outward change is often without the inward, though the inward change is never without the outward. A mans heart cannot be sanctified, but it will influence the life; but a mans life may be reformed, and yet never affect or influence the heart.

3. A man may be converted from a course of prophaneness to a form of godliness; from a filthy conversation, to a fair profession, and yet the heart the same, in one and the other. A rotten Post may be gilt without, and yet unsound within. *Hypocrita in verbis sanctus, in corde vanus; intus Nero, foris Cato. Audi, nemo melius; spectata, nemo pejus.*

It is common to have the outside of the Cup and Platter made clean, and Mat. 23. 25 yet the inside foul and filthy.

Now then, if a man may be changed morally, and yet not spiritually; outwardly

wardly, and yet not inwardly; from a ma-  
course of prophaneness, to a life of  
form of godliness; then a man may be saved  
under great and visible changes, and yet  
yet be no more than *almost a Christian* (1)

I do not speak this to discourage  
nance any change, short of that that  
is spiritual, but to awaken you to seek, th  
after that change, which is more than  
moral. It is good to be outwardly re-  
formed, but it is better to be savingly re-  
newed.

I know how natural it is for men to  
take up with any thing like a work of  
conversion, though it be not conversion  
; and resting in that, they perish  
eternally.

Beloved, let me tell you, there is no  
change, no conversion can stand your  
souls in the day of Judgement, on  
this side that saving work, which is  
wrought on the soul by the Spirit of  
God, renewing you throughout; the  
1 Thes. 5. sober man without this change, shall  
23. as surely go to Hell as the beastly  
drunkard.

Morality and civility may commend  
us to men, but not to God. They are  
of no value in the procurement of  
eternal salvation.

from A man may go far in an outward  
life change, and yet not be one step nearer  
to heaven, than he that never was under  
any change; nay, he may be (in some  
respects) farther off, as Christ saith, *The*  
*Scribes and Pharisees were farther from*  
*at the heaven,* with all their shew of godli-  
ness, than *Publicans and Harlots* in all  
their sin and uncleanness. Because rest-  
ing in a false work, a partial change,  
without neglect to seek after a true and sa-  
ving change. There is nothing more  
common than to mistake our state, and  
by overweaning thoughts mis-judge  
our condition, and so perish in our  
own delusions.

The world is full of those foolish build-  
ings, that lay the foundation of their  
houses of eternal salvation upon the sand.

Mat. 21.  
31.

Now my Brethren, would you not  
mistake the way to heaven, and perish  
in a delusion? would you not be found  
fools at last? for none are such fools as  
shall be spiritual fool, who is a fool in the  
great business of salvation. Would  
you not be fools for your souls, and  
perish for eternity? O then labour after, and  
pray for a through work of conversion,  
that God that he would make a saving  
change

change in your souls, that you may be  
together Christians; all other change  
below this saving change, this  
change, makes us but almost Christians.

11. A man may be very zealous in  
matters of Religion, and yet be but  
a Christian: Jehu did not only  
God, and do what he commanded  
but was very zealous in his service  
2 Kings, 10. 16. Come with me, and  
my zeal for the Lord of Hosts; and  
in all this Jehu was a very hypocrite.  
Joash was a great reformer in  
Jehoiadab's time; it is said, He did that which  
was right in the eyes of the Lord, all the  
days of Jehoiadab the Priest; but when  
Jehoiadab dyed, Joash his zeal for God  
dyed with him, and he becomes a  
wretch.

2 Chron.  
29. 2.

Object.

But the Apostle makes zeal to be a  
note of sound Christianity, Gal. 4. 18. It  
is good to be zealously affected in a good  
thing; nay, it seems to be the necessary  
qualification for obtaining eternal life.  
The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence,  
and the violent take it by force.

Mat. 11. 12

Sol.

It is true, there is a zeal which  
is good, and which renders the soul  
highly acceptable to God, a zeal that

never

er misses of Heaven and salvation.

Now this is a zeal which is a celestial fire, the true temper and heat of the affections to God and Christ; *non zelat, non amat.* It is a zeal thought and kindled in the soul by the Spirit of God, who first knows it, and then sets it on work. It is a zeal that hath the Word of God for its guide, directing it in working both in regard of its object and end, manner and measure. It is a zeal that checks, and forwards the heavenly life. It is a zeal that makes the glory of God its chief end, which swallows up all other ends; *The zeal of thine house hath* Joh. 2. 17.  
*Golden me up.*

But now all zeal is not this kind of zeal; there is a false zeal, as well as a true; every Grace hath its counterfeit; there is fire, which is true heavenly fire on the Altar, so there is strange fire; *Nidab and Abihu, offered strange* Lev. 10. 1.  
*fire upon Gods Altar.*

There are several kinds of zeal, some of which are true and sound, but some are false and counterfeit.

I'll instance in eight particulars.

First, *There is a blind zeal, a zeal without*



without knowledge, *Rom. 10. 2.* Such  
*have a zeal (saith the Apostle) but*  
*according to knowledge;* now as know-  
 ledge without zeal is fruitless, so  
 without knowledge is dangerous;  
 like Wild-fire in the hand of a fool,  
 like the Devil in the man possessed,  
 that threw him sometimes into  
 fire, sometimes into the water;  
*abſq; ſcientia, quo vehementius irru-*  
*gravius corrumpit.*

Mat. 17.

15.

Bernard.

The eye is the light of the body;  
 and the understanding is the light  
 of the soul; now as the body without  
 the light of the eye, cannot go  
 out stumbling; so the soul without  
 the light of the mind, cannot act  
 without erring.

Zeal without knowledge, is like  
*ignis fatuus* in a dark night, that leads  
 a Traveller out of his way, into  
 Boggs and Mire. This was the

Act. 22.

3. 4.

of Paul, while he was a Pharisee; I  
 was zealous towards God, as ye all are  
 this day, and I persecuted this way unto  
 death. And so *Act. 26. 9.* I verily thought  
 with my self, I ought to do many things  
 contrary to the Name of Jesus of Na-  
 zareth. So *Phil. 3. 6.* Concerning zeal  
 persecuting the Church.



2. Such a zeal was that in *Job. 16. 2.*  
*they shall put you out of the Synagogue,*  
 silence you, you shall not be suffered  
 to preach) yea, the time comes, that who-  
 ever kills you, will think that he doth God  
 service. This is great zeal, but yet it is  
 blind zeal, and that God abhors.

Secondly, *There is a partial zeal;* in  
 one thing fire-hot, in another key-  
 cold; zealous in this thing, and yet  
 careless in another; many are first  
 Table Christians, zealous in the duties  
 of the first Table, and yet neglect the  
 second; thus the Pharisees were zealous  
 in their *Corban* †, and yet unna-  
 tural to their parents, suffering them  
 to starve and perish. Others are second  
 Table Christians, zealous in the duties  
 of the second Table, but neglect the  
 first; more for righteousness among  
 men, than for holiness towards God.  
 Now he whose Religion ends with  
 the first Table, or begins with the  
 second, he is a fool in his profession, for  
 he is but almost a Christian.

The woman that was for the divi-  
 ding the Childe, was not the true Mo-  
 naster; and he that is for dividing the  
 commandments, is not a true believer.

*Jebu*

† Mar. 23.

Lyra hath  
 these very  
 words, Fi-  
 lius per  
 professionem factam  
 in religione  
 excusatur  
 subveni-  
 do parenti-  
 bus.

2 Kin. 10. Jehu was zealous against *Al-*  
 16. comp. house, but not so against *Jerobo-*  
 with v. 29. *Calves*; many are zealous against  
 of opinion, that yet use no zeal against  
 the sins of their conversation.

Now as we know that the sweat  
 the whole body is a sign of health, but  
 the sweat of some one part only  
 shews a distemper; and therefore *Ph-*  
 sitians do reckon such a heat to be  
 symptomatical.

*Jo. Fernel.*  
*de Febri-*  
*buss, l. 4.*  
*c. 19.*

So where zeal reaches to every  
 Command of God alike, that is a sign  
 of a sound constitution of Soul; but  
 where it is partial, where a man is hot  
 in one part, and cold in another; that  
 is symptomatical of some inward spi-  
 ritual distemper.

Thirdly, *There is a mis-placed zeal*  
 fixed upon unsuitable and disproportion-  
 able Objects. Many are very zealous  
 in trifling things that are not worth  
 it, and trifle in the things that  
 most require it; like the *Pharisees*  
 that were diligent Tithers of *Mint,*  
*Annise, and Cummin,* but neglected  
*the weightier matters of the Law, judgement, mercy,*  
*faith.* They had no zeal for these

*Mat. 23. 23*

these

though very hot for the other; many are more zealous for a Ceremony, than for the substance of Religion; more zealous for bowing at the name of Jesus, than for conformity to the life of Jesus; more zealous for a holy vestment, than for a holy life; more zealous for the inventions of men, than for the institutions of Christ.

Heathens will rise up in judgement against such men.

*Deus non superstici-  
one colit  
vult sed  
pietate,*  
said Cicero.

This is a superstitious zeal, and usually found in men unconverted, whom Grace never was wrought in. When was it that Paul was so exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his Fathers, as he saith, *Gal. 1. 14.* but only when he was in his wretched and unconverted state? as you may see in the next verses, *But when it pleased God to call me by his grace, then I conferred not with flesh and blood.* Paul had another kind of zeal then, acted by other kind of principles.

*Gal. 1. 15,  
16.*

Fourthly, *There is a selfish zeal,* that hath a mans own ends for its motive; *Jehu* was very zealous, but it was not so much for God, as for the Kingdom, not so much in obedience to the command, as in design to step into the Throne; and therefore

God threatens to punish him for that very thing he commands him to do, *Hof. 1. 4. I will avenge the blood of Jerreel upon the house of Jehu.* Because he shed that blood to gratifie his lust, not to obey God. So *Simeon* and *Levi* pretend great zeal for Circumcision, *Gen. 34. 14, 15.* very zealous for the honour of Gods Ordinances, when in truth their zeal was for Covetousness, and revenge upon the *Sechemites*. *com with v. 25, 26. 27, 28, 29.*

Fifthly, *There is an outside zeal*, such was that of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, they would not eat with unwashed hands, but yet would live in unseen sins; they would wash the Cup often, but the Heart seldome; paint the outside, but neglect the inside. *Jehu* was a mighty outside reformer, *2 King. 10. 16.* but he reformed nothing within, for he had a base heart under all, *v. 31.* *Jehu* took no heed to walk in the Law of the Lord with all his heart. Though his fleece was fair, his liver was rotten.

Our Lord Christ observes of the *Pharisees*, *They pray to be seen of men* and fast so, *That they may appear to men to fast*, *Mat. 6. 5, 16.*

Sixthly, *There is a forinseck zeal*, that

*Ne appetat  
qui quam  
ultra videri  
quam est ut  
possit ultra  
esse quam  
videtur.  
Greg.*

runs out upon others, like the candle in the lanthorn, that sends all the heat out at top, or as the lewd woman Solomon mentions, whose feet abide not in her own house. Prov. 7. 12.

Many are hot and high against the sins of others, and yet cannot see the same in themselves; like the *Lamie*, that put on their spectacles when they went abroad, but pulled them off within doors.

It is easie to see faults in others, and as hard to see them in our selves. *Jebe* was zealous against *Baal* & his Priests; *Tecum habita* because that was *Abahs* sin; but not against the Calves of *Bethel*, because that was his own sin. This zeal is the true character of an hypocrite; his own Garden is over-run with weeds, while he is busie in looking over his Neighbours Pale.

Seventhly, *There is a sinful zeal*; all the former may be called sinfull from some defect; but this I call sinfull in a more special notion, because against the life and chief of Religion; it is a zeal against zeal, that flies not at prophaness, but at the very power of godliness, not an error, but at truth,

and is most hot against the most spiritual and important truths of the times. Whence else are the sufferings of men for the truth, but from this spirit of zeal against truth? This may be called a devillish zeal; for as there is the faith of Devils, so there is the zeal of Devils; therefore his rage is great, because he knows his time is short.

Jam. 2. 19.

Rev. 12.

12.

8<sup>ly</sup>. There is a Scriptureless zeal, that is not butted and bounded by the word, but by some base and low end; such was *Sauls* zeal, when God bids him destroy *Amaleck*, and spare neither man nor beast; then contrary to Gods command, he spares the best of the *Sheep and Oxen*, under pretence of zeal for Gods Sacrifice.

1 Sam. 15.

3.

Another time when he had no such command, then he slaies the *Gibeonites* in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.

2 Sam. 21.

2.

Many a mans zeal is greater then and there, when and where he hath the least warrant from God.

The true spirit of zeal is bounded by Scripture; for it is for God, and the concernments of his glory: God hath no glory from that zeal that hath no Scripture warrant.

Now



Now then, if the zeal of a man in the things of God, may be only a blind zeal, or a partial zeal, or a misplaced zeal, or a selfish zeal, or an out-side zeal, or a forensick zeal, or a sinful zeal, or a scriptureless zeal, then it is evident that a man may be very zealous in the matters of Religion, and yet be but *almost a Christian*.

12. *A man may be much in prayer, Mar. 13. 15. be may pray often, and pray much, and yet be but almost a Christian:*

So did the Pharisees, whom yet our Lord Christ rejects for Hypocrites.

But is not a praying frame an argument of a sincere heart? are not the Saints of God, called, *The generation of them that seek the face of God?* Psal. 24. 6.

A man is not therefore a Christian, *Sol.* because he is much in prayer. I grant,

That those prayers that are from the workings and sighings of Gods Spirit in us; from sincere hearts lifted up to God; from a sense of our own emptiness, and Gods infinite fulness; That are suited to Gods will, the great rule of prayer;



That are for spiritual things, more than temporal :

That are accompanied with faith and dependance : Such prayers speak a man *altogether a Christian*. But now a man may be much in prayer, and yet be a stranger to such prayer : As,

1. Nature may put a man upon prayer, for it is a part of natural worship, it may put a child of God upon prayer ; so it did Christ, *Mat. 26. 39, 42. He went and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.* This was a prayer of Christ, which flowed from the senseless strugglings of Nature, seeking its own preservation.

2. A man may pray in pretence for a covering to some sin ; so did those devout Pharisees, *Mat. 23. 14. Wo to you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites ; for ye devour widows houses, and for a pretence make long prayers, therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.* So the Papists seem very devout to pray a rich mans soul out of Purgatory, but it is to cheat the Heir of much of his Estate, under pretence of praying for his fathers soul.

3. A

3. A man may pray, and yet love sin, as *Austin*, before conversion, pray'd against his sin, but was afraid God should hear him, and take him at his word. Now God hears not such prayers, *Psa. 66. 18.* If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayer.

4. A man may pray much for temporal things, and little for spiritual things; and such are the prayers of most men, crying out most for temporal things: More for, *Who will shew us any good?* then for, *Lord lift upon us the light of thy countenance.* *David* copies out the prayer of such, *Psal. 144. 12, &c.* That our sons may be as plants, and 144. and that our daughters may be as corner stones 12, to 16. polished after the similitude of a Palace: That our Garners may be full, &c. Happy is the people that is in such a Case; This is the carnal hearts prayer; and this *David* calls vanity, verse 11. They are strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity.

5. A man may pray, and yet be far from God in prayer. This people draw nigh to me with their mouth, and honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me, *Mat. 15. 8.* A man may pray,

and yet have no heart in prayer, and  
 Prov. 23. that God chiefly looks at ; My son,  
 26. give me thy heart.

The Jews have this sentence written upon the walls of their Synagogues, *Prayer without the intention of the mind, is but a body without a soul.*

It is not enough to be conscionable to use prayer, but we must be conscionable to the use of Prayer. Many are so conscientious, that they dare not but pray ; and yet so irreligious, that they have no heart in prayer ; a common work of God may make a man conscionable to do duties, but nothing less than saving grace in the heart will make a man conscionable in the doing of them.

Psal. 78.

34. Some derive the Latine *colo*, to worship, from the Greek *κολακεύειν* to flatter, and the English word *flatter*, from the Greek word *λατρεύειν*, to worship.

6. A mans prayer may be a lye ; as a profession without sanctity, is a lye to the world ; so prayer without sincerity, is a lye to God. It is said of Israel, that they sought God, and enquired early after him ; they were much in prayer, and God calls all but a lye. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lyed to him with their tongues, for their heart was not with him, v. 36, 37.

Hearken

Hearken to my prayer that goeth not  
out of feigned lips, saith David, Psal.  
17. 1.

7. Afflictions and the pressures of  
outward evils will make a man pray,  
and pray much, Psal. 78. 34. When he  
saw them, then they sought him, and re-  
turned and enquired early after God. The  
Heathen Mariners call every man up-  
on his God when in a storm; when they  
fear drowning, then they fall to pray-  
ing, Jon. 1. 5. Mariners are for the  
most part none of the devoutest, nor  
much addicted to prayer; they will  
swear twice where they pray once; and  
yet it is said, They cry to the Lord  
in their trouble, Psal. 107. 23, 28. and  
hence you have a Proverb, He that  
cannot pray, let him go to Sea.

*Nuper me  
amici cu-  
jusdam  
languor  
admonuit  
optimos esse  
nos dum  
infirmi si-  
mus, Flin.  
Ep. 16. l. 7.  
Qui ne  
cic  
ocare  
dis-  
cat navi-  
gare.*

They poured out a prayer when thy  
chastening was upon them, Isa. 26. 16.

Now then, if nature may put a man  
upon prayer; if a man may pray in  
pretence and design; if a man may  
pray, and yet love sin; if a man may  
pray mostly for temporal things; if a  
man may pray, and yet be far from God  
in prayer; if prayer may be a lye; or  
if it may be only the cry of the soul

under affliction; sure then a man may be much in prayer, and yet be but *almost a Christian*.

**Object.**

But suppose a man pray, and prevail with God in prayer, surely that is a witness from heaven of mans sincerity in prayer; now I pray and prevail; I ask and am answered.

**Sol.**

A man may pray and be answered; for God many times answers prayers in judgement; as God is sometimes silent in mercy, so he speaks in wrath; and as he sometimes denies prayer in mercy, so he sometimes answers in judgement: when men are over-impetunate in some things their lusts are upon, and will take no nay, then God answers in judgement, *Psa. 78. 29. He gave them their own desire; They had desired Quails, and God sends them, but now mark the judgement, v. 30, 31. While the meat was in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew them.*

**Object.**

I, but suppose a mans affections are much stirred in prayer, how then? is not that a true note of Christianity? Now my affections are much stirred in prayer.

So was Esau's when he sought the blessing, *He sought it carefully with tears.* A man may be affected with his own parts in a duty; while good notions pass through his head, and good words through his lips, some good motions also may stir in his heart, but they are but sparks which flie out at the Tunnel of the Chimney, which suddenly vanish. So that it is possible a man may pray, and prevail in prayer; pray and be affected in prayer, and yet be but almost a Christian.

Sol.  
Heb. 11.  
17.

13. A man may suffer for Christ, in his goods, in his name, in his person, and yet be but almost a Christian.

Every man that bears Christs Cross on his shoulders, doth not therefore bear Christs Image in his soul.

But doth not our Lord Christ make great promises to them that suffer, or lose any thing for him? doth not he say, Mat. 19. 29. Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my Names sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life? Sure they are true Christians whom Christ makes this promise to.

Object.  
Mar. 19.  
22.

There



*Sol.* There is a suffering for Christ, that is a note of sincerity, and shall have its reward.

*Mat. 5. 10, 11, 12.* That is, when a man suffers for a good cause, upon a good call, and with a good conscience, for Christs sake, and in Christs strength : when his sufferings are a filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ ; when a man suffers as a Christian, as the Apostle hath it, *1 Pet. 4. 6. If a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed*, when a man thrusts not himself into suffering, but stays Gods call, such suffering is a proof of integrity.

*Mark 14. 28, 29.*

But now every suffering for Christ, is not suffering as a Christian : For,

*1. A man may suffer for Christ, for that profession of Religion that is upon him ; the World hates the shew of Religion ; times may come, that it may cost a man as dear to wear the Livery of Christ, as to wear Christ himself. Alexander had like to have lost his life for the Gospel sake, *Act. 19. 33.* yet he was that Alexander (as is generally judged) that afterward made Shipwreck of faith, and greatly opposed Pauls Ministry.*

*1 Tim. 1. 19, 20. and 4. 14.*



2. A man may suffer for Christ, and yet have no true love to Christ. This is supposed in 1 Cor. 13. 3. *Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits nothing.*

Love to Christ is the only Noble ground of suffering, but a man may suffer much upon other ends.

1. Out of opinion of meriting by our suffering, as the Papists: Or,

2. Out of vain-glory, or for applause among professors; some have died that their names might live: Or,

3. Out of a Roman resolution, or stoutness of spirit.

4. Out of a design of profit, as *Judas* forsook all for Christ, hoping to mend his Market by closing with him; Or,

5. Rather to maintain an opinion, than for truths propagation; *Socrates* died for maintaining that there was but one God; but whether he dyed rather for his own opinion, than for Gods sake, I think it is no hard matter to determine. Thus a man may suffer for professing Christ, and yet suffer upon wrong principles.

Now then, if a man may suffer for Christ, from the profession that is upon him;

him; or suffer for Christ, and yet not truly love him; then a man may suffer for Christ, and yet be but almost a Christian.

14. *A man may be called of God, and embrace this call, and yet be but almost a Christian.* Judas is a famous instance of this truth, he was called by Christ himself, and came at the call of Christ, and yet Judas was but almost a Christian.

Objct.

But is not the being under the call of God, a proof of our interest in the predestinating love of God? doth not the Apostle say, *whom he predestinated, them he called*? Rom. 8. 30. Nay, doth he not say in the same verse, *Whom he called, them he justified*? Nay, doth not God call all whom he intends to save?

Sol.

Though God calleth all those that shall be saved, yet all shall not be saved whom God calleth; every man under the Gospel is called of God in one sense or other, but yet every man under the Gospel, shall not therefore be saved. *For many are called, but few are chosen.*

Mat. 20.

16.

There is a two-fold { Internal.  
call of God. { External.

1. There is an internal call of God;

Now

Now this call is a special work of the Spirit by the Ministry of the Word, whereby a man is brought out of a state of Nature into a state of Grace; out of darkness into light; from being vessels of wrath, to be made heirs of life. *Act. 26. 18.*

I grant, that whoever is under this call of God, is called off. Actually and livingly, called to be a Christian indeed. *Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father comes to me.* *Joh. 6. 45.*

2. There is a call of God which a man may have, and yet not be this call; there is an external call of God, which is by the Ministry of the Word.

Now every man that lives under the preaching of the Gospel, is thus called; God calls every soul of you *Mar. 22. 9.* to repent, and lay a sure foundation for Heaven and Salvation, by the Word you hear this day.

But now every man that is thus called, is not therefore a Christian: For,

1. Many under the call of God, come to Christ, but are not converted to Christ, have nothing of the grace and life of Christ; such as he, *Mat. 22.* who when Christ sent out his servants to bid guests unto the Marriage, came in

in at the call of Christ, but yet *not on the wedding garment*, v. 11. *that* is, had none of the grace and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

2. Many that are under the call of the Gospel, come to Christ, and yet afterwards fall away from Christ, as *2 Tim. 4.* *Judas and Demas did*; it is said, when *10.* Christ preached a Doctrine which his Disciples did not like, that from that *Joh. 6. 66.* time many of his Disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

Now then, if many are under this external call of God only, if many that come to Christ, are not converted to Christ, but fall away from Christ, then a man may be called of God, and yet be but *almost a Christian*.

15. *A man may have the Spirit of God, and yet be but almost a Christian.* Balaam had the Spirit of God given him when he blessed Israel, *Numb. 24. 2.* Balaam saw Israel abiding in Tents, and the Spirit of Lord came upon him. Judas had; for by the Spirit he cast out Devils; he was one of them that came to Christ, and said, Lord, even the Devils are subject us. Saul had, *1 Sam. 10. 10.* Behold a company of
- Prophets

Prophets met him, and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.

But you'l say, Can a man have the Object. Spirit of God, and yet not be a Christian? Indeed the Scripture saith, If any <sup>Rom 8. 9.</sup> man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; but surely if any man have the spirit of Christ, he is his.

There is a having the Spirit, which <sup>Sol.</sup> is a sure mark of Saint-ship. Where the spirit is an effectual prevailing principle of grace and sanctification, renewing and regenerating the heart. Where the spirit is as a potent worker, <sup>Rom. 8. 26.</sup> helping the souls infirmities: Where the spirit is so as to abide for ever. But <sup>Joh. 14.</sup> now every man that hath the spirit, hath not the spirit in this manner: <sup>15</sup> For,

1. A man may have the spirit only transiently, not abidingly; the spirit may be in a man, and yet not dwell in a man; the spirit is where-ever he dwells; but he doth not dwell where ever he is; he is in all, but dwells in Saints only; he is in all, <sup>Lumb. 1. 1</sup> per divinitatis presentiam, but dwells in Saints only <sup>sent. dist.</sup> per inhabitationis gratiam; the Hypo- <sup>17.</sup> crite

X  
 crite may have the spirit for a season, but not to abide in him for ever.

Joh. 3. 45.

2. A man may have the spirit, yet not be born of the spirit; every true Christian is born of the spirit; an Hypocrite may have the gifts of the Spirit, but not the graces; the spirit may be in him by way of illumination, but not by way of sanctification, by way of conviction, but not by way of conversion: though he may have much common grace for the good of others, yet he may have no special grace for the good of himself; though his profession be spiritual, yet is his state and condition carnal.

3. A man may have the spirit only as a spirit of bondage: thus many have the spirit working only to bondage. The spirit of bondage is an operation of the Holy Ghost by the Law, convincing the conscience of sin, and of the curse of the Law, and working in the soul, such an apprehension of the wrath of God, as makes the thoughts of God a terror to him.

This spirit may be, and often is, without saving grace; this operation of the spirit was in Cain and Judas.

Though none that receive the spirit

Adoption, but they first receive the  
 spirit of bondage; yet many receive the  
 spirit of bondage, that never receive  
 the spirit of adoption.

4. A man may have the Spirit of  
 God working in him, and yet it may  
 be resisted by him: It is said of the  
 Israelites, *They rebelled and vexed his holy* *Isa. 63. 10.*  
*spirit;* and the same sin is charged up-  
 on their children, *Act. 7. 51.* *Ye stiff-*  
*necked and uncircumcised in heart, ye*  
*that always resisted the Holy Ghost; as*  
*our fathers did, so do ye.* The Hypo-  
 crite retains not the spirit so long, as  
 to come up to regeneration and adop-  
 tion, but quenches the motions of it,  
 and thereby miscarries eternally.

5. A man may have the spirit, and  
 yet sin that unpardonable sin; he may  
 have the Holy Ghost, and yet sin the  
 sin against the Holy Ghost; nay, no  
 man can sin this sin against it, but he  
 that hath some degree of it.

The true believer hath so much of  
 the spirit, such a work of it in him, that  
 he cannot sin that sin: *he that is born of*  
*God sins not, to wit, that sin unto death,*  
*for that is meant, 1 Joh. 5. 16, 17, 18.*  
 The carnal professed sinner, he cannot  
 sin



sin that sin, because he is carnal  
 sensual, *having not the spirit*. A  
 must have some measure of the  
 that sins this sin; so hath the hypocrite  
 he is said to be partaker of the  
 Ghost, Heb. 6. 4. and he only is capable  
 of sinning the sin against the  
 Ghost.

Now then, if a man may have  
 spirit transiently only, not abiding  
 if a man may have the spirit, and  
 not be born of the spirit; if he  
 have the spirit only as a spirit of  
 dudge; if a man may have the  
 working in him, and yet it may be  
 sisted by him; if a man may have  
 spirit, and yet sin that unpardonable  
 sin against it; then surely a man may  
 have the Spirit of God; and yet be  
 almost a Christian.

Luk. 8. 15. 16. A man may have faith, and  
 be but almost a Christian; the  
 ground (that is, those hearers set  
 by the stony ground) for a while  
 believed. It is said, Job. 2. 23. that  
 believed in the Name of Christ, yet  
 durst not commit himself to  
 Though they trusted in Christ,  
 Christ would not trust them;

*Fides mi-  
 nime fides;  
 quippe ex  
 miraculis  
 nata.*

because he knew all men, vers. 24.  
 knew they were rotten at root,  
 withstanding their faith; a man  
 have all faith, even to the remo- <sup>1</sup> Cor. 13.  
 Mountains, and yet be *nothing*. <sup>2.</sup>

But how can this be, that a man *Object*.  
 have faith, and yet be but *almost*  
*Christian*? Doth not our Lord  
 promise life eternal, and sal-  
 vation to all that believe? Is not this  
 Gospel that is to be preached to  
 every creature, *He that believes, shall*  
*be saved*? Mark 16. 16.

Though it is true what our Lord *Sol*.  
 Christ saith, that *he that believes, shall*  
*be saved*: yet it is as true that many  
 believe that shall never be saved; for  
*Simon Magus* believed; yea, *James* saith,  
*The Devils believe and tremble*: Now *Jam. 2. 19.*  
 one will say these shall be saved.

As it is true, what the Apostle saith,  
*All men have not faith*; so it is as true, <sup>2</sup> *The 3. 2.*  
 that there are some men have faith,  
 who are no whit the better for their  
*Christian*.

You must know therefore } *Special and*  
 there is a two-fold faith, } *Saving.*  
 } *Common &*  
 } *not saving.*  
 1. There

## 1. There is a saving faith.

Col. 2. 10. This is called *Faith of the operation of God.*

It is a work of Gods own spirit in the soul.

It is such a faith as rests and settles the soul wholly upon Christ, for Grace and Glory, Pardon and Peace, Sanctification and Salvation.

Act. 15. 9. It is an united act of the whole soul, understanding, will, and affections, all concurring to unite the soul to an all-sufficient Redeemer.

It is such a faith as *purifies the heart* & makes it clean, it influences & gives strength and life to all other graces.

Now whoever hath this faith, is a Christian indeed; this is the *Faith of Gods elect.* But then,

2. There is a common faith, not saving, a fading and temporary faith; there is the faith of *Simon Magus*, as well as the faith of *Simon Peter*; *Simon Magus* believed, and yet was in bondage

Act. 8. 13. *of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.*  
com. with ver. 13.

Now *Simon Magus* hath more followers than *Simon Peter*; the faith of most men will at last be found to be worse than the faith of *Simon Magus*. For,

First, The faith of most is but a *temporary faith*, it dures for a while, and then dies and perisheth; true and saving faith such as is the *faith of Gods children*, cannot dye; it may fail in the *act*, but not in the *Habit*? the sap may *Luk 21.32.* not be in the branch, but it is al-  
ways in the root.

That faith that perisheth, that faith man may have and perish.

Secondly, There is a faith that lies only in generals, not in particulars, as there is a general and particular object of faith, so there is a general and particular faith. The general object of faith is the whole Scripture; the particular object of faith is Christ in the promise.

Now many have a general faith to believe all the Scripture, and yet have no faith to make a particular application of Jesus Christ in the promise.

Devils and Reprobates may believe the truth of the Scripture, and what is written of the dying and suffering of Christ for sinners: but there are but few that can close up themselves in the wounds of Christ, and by his stripes fetch in healing to their souls.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, there is a faith that is seated in the understanding, but not in the will ; this is a very common faith ; many assent to the truth.

They believe all the Attributes of God, that he is just, holy, wise, faithful, good, merciful, &c. But yet they rest not on him notwithstanding.

They believe the Commands are true, but yet do not obey them ; they believe the promises are true, but yet do not embrace and apply them ; they believe the threatnings are true, but yet do not flee from them.

Thus their faith lies in assent, but not consent ; they have faith to condemn a Judgement, but none to take an Execution ; by assent they lay a foundation, but never build upon it by application.

They believe that Christ dyed to save them that believe, and yet they believe not in Christ that they may be saved.

Oh my brethren, it is not a *believing head*, but a *believing heart*, that makes

Rom. 10. a Christian ; *with the heart man believes*  
 10. *to righteousness ; without this our faith*  
 1 Cor. 15. *vain, we are yet in our sins.*  
 17.

Fourth

Fourthly, There is a faith without experience ; many believe the Word upon hear-say , to be the Word of God, but they never felt the power and virtue of it upon their hearts and consciences. Now what good is it to believe the truth of the Word, if a mans conscience never felt the power of the Word ? What is it to believe the truth of the promise, if we never tasted the sweetness of the promise ?

We are in this case, like a man that believes the description others make of strange Countries ; but never travelled them to know the truth ; or as a Patient that believes all the Physician sayes ; but yet tryes none of his Potions. We believe the Word, because we cannot gain-say it ; but yet we have no experience of any saving good wrought by the Word, and so we but *almost a Christian*.

Fifthly, There is a faith that is without brokenness of heart, that doth not avail to melt or soften the heart, and therefore is not true faith ; for the least true faith is ever joyned with a bending will, and a broken heart.

Sixthly, There is a faith that trans-

G

forms

forms not the heart; faith without fruit, that doth not bring forth the new creature, in the soul, but leaves it in a state of sin and death.

This is a faith that makes a man a fond professor, but not a sound believer; he believes the truth, but not as it is in Jesus; for then it would  
 Eph. 4. 21. change and transform him into the likeness of Jesus. He believes that a man must be changed that would be saved, but yet is not savingly changed by believing. Thus while others believe to salvation, he believes to damnation;  
 Ha. 56. 9. for *his web shall not become a garment, neither shall he cover himself with his work.*

Now then, if a mans faith may be but temporary, or may lye only in generals, or may be seated in the understanding only, or may be without experience, or may be without a broken heart, or without a new heart; surely then a man may have faith, he may  
 Heb. 6. 4. *taste of this heavenly gift, and yet be but almost a Christian.*

17. A man may go further yet, He may possibly have a love to the people of God, and yet be but almost a Christian,

every



every kind of love to those who are Saints, is not a proof of our Saintship: Pharaoh loved Joseph, and advanced him to the second place in the Kingdom, and yet Pharaoh was but a wicked man: Ahab loved Jehoshaphat, and made a league with him, and married his daughter Athaliah to Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son, and yet Ahab was a wicked wretch.

But you will say, This seems to contradict the testimony of the Scripture; for that makes love to the Saints and people of God, a sure proof of our regeneration, and interest in life eternal, 1 Joh. 3. 14. *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.* Nay, the Spirit of God putteth this as a Characteristical distinction between Saints and Sinners, in v. 10. *In this the children of God are manifest; and the children of the Devil; whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brethren.* By Brethren we do not understand, Brethren by place, those who are of the same Country or Nation, such are called Brethren, Rom. 9. 13. *As it is written, 23, 25. Nor do we understand Bre-*

Object.

G 2

thren

*thren by race*, those who are descended of the same Parents: such are called Brethren, *Mat. 1. 2.* But by Brethren we understand Brethren by grace, and supernatural regeneration, such as are the Children of God; and these are the Brethren whom to love is a sure sign that we are the Children of God.

Phil. 16.

Sol.

To this I answer, That there is a love to the Children of God, which is a proof of our being the Children of God.

As for instance, when we love them as such, for that very reason, as being the Saints of God; when we love them for the Image of God, which appeareth in them, because of that grace and holiness which shineth forth in their conversations; this is truly commendable; to love the godly for godliness sake, the Saints for Saintship sake; this is a sure testimony of our Christianity. The love of grace in another, is a good proof of the life of grace in ourselves. There can be no better evidence of the Spirit of Christ in us, than to love the Image of Christ in others. For this is a certain truth, that a sinner cannot love a Saint as such.

An *Israelite* is an abomination to an *Egyptian*.

There is a contrariety and natural enmity between the two seeds; between the children of the World, and those whom the Father in his eternal love hath chosen out of the World. Gen. 3. 15  
Joh. 15. 19

It is likeness which is the great ground of love; now there is the highest dissimilitude and unlikeness between an unregenerate sinner, and a child of God; and therefore a child of God cannot love a sinner as a sinner; *in whose eyes a vile person is contemned*, *simile simili gaudet.* *Psa. 15. 4.* He may love him as a creature; he may love his Soul, or he may love him under some relation that he stands in to him. Thus God loves the damned spirits, as they are his creatures, but as fallen Angels he hateth them with an infinite hatred: So to love a sinner *quatenus* a sinner, this a child of God cannot do, so neither can a sinner love a child of God as a child of God. That he may love a child of God, that I grant, but it is upon some other consideration; he may love a person that is holy, not the person for his holiness, but for some other respect. As,

1. A man may love a Child of God for his loving, peaceable, courteous deportment to all with whom he converseth. Religion beautifies the conversation of a man, and sets him off to the eye of the world: The grace of God is no friend to a morose, churlish, unmannerly behaviour among men; it provokes in us an affable demeanour and sweetness to all, and where this is found it winneth respect and love from all.

Jan. 2. 2, 3 2. A man may love a Saint for his outward greatness and splendor in the World; men are very apt to honour worldly greatness: and therefore the *rich Saint* shall be loved and honoured, whilst the *poor Saint* is hated and despised. This is as if a man should value the goodness of his Sword by the Embroidery of his Belt; or his Horse for the beauty of his trappings, rather than for his strength and swiftness.

True love to the *Children of God*, reaches to all the children of God, poor as well as rich, bond as well as free, ignoble as well as noble; for the Image of Christ is alike amiable and lovely in all.

3. A man may love a Child of God for his fidelity and usefulness in his place. Where Religion in the power of it taketh hold of a mans heart, it makes him true to all his betrustments, diligent in his business, faithfull in all his relations; and this obligeth Respect. A carnal Master may prize a godly Apprentice or Servant that makes conscience of pleasing his Master, and is diligent in promoting his *interest*.

I might instance in many things of the like nature, as charity, beauty, wit, learning, parts, &c. which may procure love to the people of God from the men of the world. But this love is no proof of Charity: For,

First, It is but a *Natural* love, arising from some carnal respect, or self-ends: that love which is made by the Scripture an evidence of our Regeneration, Col. 1. 8. is a *spiritual* love, the principal loadstone and attractive whereof is grace and holiness; it is a love which embraceth a *righteous man in the name of a Mar. 10 41* *righteous man*.

2. A carnal mans love to Saints is Esth. 10. 3. a limited and bounded love, it is not universal, to all the seed; Now as in sin,

he that doth not make conscience of every sin, maketh conscience of no sin as sin; so he who doth not love all in whom the Image of *Christ* is found, loveth none for that of the Image of *Christ* which is found in them.

Now then, if the love we bear to the people of God may possibly arise from natural love only, or from some carnal respect; or if it be a limited love, not extended to all the people of God, then it is possible that a man may love the people of God, and yet be no better than *almost a Christian*.

18. *A man may obey the commands of God, yea many of the commands of God, and yet be but almost a Christian.* Balaam seems very conscientious of steering his course by the compass of Gods command; when Balak sent to him to come and curse the people of God, saith Balaam, *If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God,*

Numb. 23. Numb. 22. 18. and so in the 38. ver. 12, 20, 26. saith he, *The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak;* the young man went far in obedience, Mar. 10. 20. *All these have I observed from my youth*

up. And yet he was but an hypocrite, for he forsook Christ after all.

But is it not said, *He that hath my Object. Commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my father, and I will love him, and manifest my self unto him,* John 14. 21. And doth not our Lord Christ tell us expressely, *ye are my friends if ye do what I command you,* Joh. 15. 14. And can a man be the friend of Christ, and yet be but almost a Christian.

I answer, that there is an obedience *Sol.* to the commands of Christ, which is a sure proof of our Christianity and friendship to Christ.

This obedience hath a three-fold property.

It is { Evangelical,  
Universal,  
Continual.

First, It is *Evangelical* obedience, and that both in matter and manner, ground and end.

In the *matter* of it, and that is what God requires, *John 15. 14. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatever I command you.*

In the *manner* of it, and that is accord-



ing as God requires, *Job. 4. 24. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit, and in truth.*

In the ground of it, and that is, a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith well-secured, *1 Tim. 1. 5.*

In the end of it, and that is the honour and glory of God; *whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God, 1 Cor. 10. 31.*

Secondly, It is an universal obedience, which extendeth it self to all the commands of God alike; it respects the duties of both Tables; such was the obedience of *Caleb, who followed the Lord fully; and of David, who had respect to all the commands.*

Thirdly, It is a continual obedience, a putting the hand to Gods Plow without looking back; *I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always, even to the end, Psal. 119. 112.*

He that thus obeys the command of God, is a Christian indeed, a friend of Christ indeed; but all obedience to the commands of God, is not this obedience. For,

1. There is a partial obedience, a piece-meal Religion, when a man obeys God in one command, and not in another;

Num. 14.

24.

Psa. 119. 6.

*Incipere  
multorum  
est, perse-  
verare  
parvorum.  
Bern.*

another; owns him in one duty, and not in another; when a man seems to make conscience of the duties of one Table, and not of the duties of another. This is the Religion of most.

Now this obedience is no obedience; for as he that doth not love God *above all*, doth not love God *at all*; so he that doth not obey *all* the Commands *universally*, cannot be said to obey any Command *truly*. It is said of those in *Samaria*, that they feared the Lord, and served their own gods, after their own manner, 2 Kings 17. 33. And yet in the very next verse it is said, They feared not the Lord; so that their fear of the Lord was no fear: in like manner that obedience to God is no obedience, which is but a partial and piece-meal obedience.

2. A man may obey much, and yet be in his old nature; and if so, then all his obedience in that estate, is but *gloridum peccatum*, a painted sin; he that offereth an Oblation, is as if he offered swines blood, and he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an Idol, Isa. 66. 3. The nature must be renewed, before the command can be rightly obeyed; for

for a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, Mat. 7. 18. Whatever a man's performances are, they cannot be called *obedience*, whilst the heart remaineth unregenerate, because the *Principle* is false and unsound; every duty done by a believer, is accepted of God, as Eph. 6. 6. a part of his Obedience to the Will of God, though it be done in much weakness; because though the believers *hand* is weak, yet his *heart* is right; the hypocrite may have the most *active hand*, but the believer hath the most *faithful* and *sincere heart*.

3. A man may obey the *Law*, and yet have no love to the *Law-giver*; a carnal heart may do the command of God, but he cannot love God, and therefore cannot do it aright; for love to God, is the foundation and spring of all true obedience; every Command of God is to be done in love, this is the *fulfilling of the Law*, Rom. 13. 10. The Apostle saith, *Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned*; these seem to be acts of the highest obedience; yet if I have not love, it profits me nothing, 1 Cor. 13. 3.

4. I might adde, that a man may be much in obedience, from sinister and base selfish ends, as the *Pharisees* prayed much, gave much alms, fasted much; but our Lord Christ tells us, that it was, *That they might be seen of men, and have glory of men*, Mat. 6. 2, 5, 16. Most of the hypocrites Piety empties it self into vain-glory; and therefore he is but an *empty vine* in all he doth, because he *bringeth forth fruit to himself*, Hos. 10. 1.

It is the end that justifies the action; indeed a good end cannot make a bad action good; but yet the want of a good end, makes a good action bad.

Now then, if a man may obey the Commands of God partially, and by halves; if he may do it, and yet be in his natural state; if he may obey the Commands of God, and yet not love God; if the ends of his obedience may be sinful and unwarrantable, then a man may be much in obeying the Commands of God, and yet be but *almost a Christian*.

19. *A man may be sanctified, and yet be but almost a Christian*; every kind of sanctification doth not make a man a new creature; for many are sanctified that

that are never renewed. You read in Heb. 10. 29. of them that count the blood of the Covenant wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing.

Object.

But doth not the Scripture tell us, That both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Heb. 2. 11. And can a man be one with Christ, and yet be but almost a Christian?

Sol.

To this I answer; You must know there is a two-fold work of sanctification spoken of in Scripture.

The one common and ineffectual.

The other special and effectual.

That work of Sanctification which is true and effectual, is a work of the Spirit of God in the soul, enabling it to the mortifying of all sin, to the obeying of every Command, to walking with God in all well-pleasing.

Rom. 8. 13

1 Pet. 1. 2.

Heb. 13.

Now whoever is thus sanctified, is one with him that sanctifieth. Christ will not be ashamed to call such brethren, for they are *flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone.*

Eph. 5. 30.

But then there is a more common work of Sanctification, which is ineffectual

fectual as to the two great works of dying to sin, and living to God. This Rom. 6.11 and of sanctification may help to restrain sin, but not to mortifie sin; it may lop off the boughs, but it layeth not the Axe to the root of the tree; it sweeps and garnishes the rooms with Mat. 11.44 common virtues, but doth not adorn it with saving graces; so that a man is but almost a Christian, notwithstanding this Sanctification.

Or thus,  $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{Inward} \\ \text{and} \\ \text{Outward} \end{array} \right\} \text{Sanctification.}$   
there is an

*Inward Sanctification*, is that which deals with the Soul and its faculties; understanding, conscience, will, memory and affections; *Outward Sanctification* is that which deals with the life and conversation; both these must concur to make a man a Christian indeed; therefore the Apostle puts them together in his prayer for the Thessalonians, 1 Thes. 5. 23. *The God of peace sanctifie you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* A man is then sanctified wholly, when he is sanctified both

*Non magna munera, sed immunda manus, mens qua sincera. Deo placent.*

both inwardly and outwardly, both in heart and affections, and in life and conversation. Outward sanctification is not enough without inward, nor inward without outward; we must have both *clean hands, and a pure heart*, *Psal. 24. 4.* The heart must be pure, that we may not incur blame from within; and the hands must be clean, that we may not incur shame from without; we must have hearts *sprinkled from an evil conscience, and bodies washed with pure water.* We must cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, *2 Cor. 7. 1.* Inward purity is the most excellent, but without the outward it is not sufficient; the true Christian is made up of both.

Heb. 10.  
22.

—Now many have clean hands, but unclean hearts; they *wash the outside of the cup and platter, when all is filthy within*; Now the former without the latter, profiteth a man no more than it profited *Pilate*, who condemned Christ, to wash his hands in the presence of the people; *Manus abluit & cor polluit*, he washed his hands of the blood of Christ, and yet had a hand in the death of Christ. The Egyptian Temples

Mat. 27.  
24.



Temples were beautiful on the outside, but within you should find nothing but some Serpent or Crocodile. It is not a Jew which is one outwardly, *Mat. 23. 28.* Judas was a Saint without, but a sinner within; openly a Disciple, but secretly a Devil.

*Joh. 6. 70.*

Some pretend to inward sanctity, without outward; this is the pretence of the open sinner: Though I sometimes drop an idle foolish word, faith be, or though I sometimes swear an oath, yet I think no hurt, I thank God, my heart is as good as the best; such are like the sinner Moses mentions, that *blest himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine own heart, to adde drunkenness to thirst, Deut. 19. 20.*

Some pretend outward sanctity, without inward; such are like the Scribes and Pharisees, who outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within are *Mat. 23. 28* full of hypocrisie and iniquity; fair professors, but foul sinners.

Inward sanctity, without outward, is impossible, for it will reform the life; outward sanctity, without inward, is unprofitable, for it will not reform the

the heart ; a man is not a true Christian without both ; the body does not make a man without the soul, nor the soul without the body ; both are essential to the being of a man ; so the sanctification of both, are essential to the being of the *new man*. True sanctification begins at the heart, but works out into the life and conversation ; and if so, then a man may attain to an outward sanctification, and yet for want of the inward, be no better than *almost a Christian*.

20. And so I shall end this long pursuit of the almost Christian in his progress Heaven-ward, with this *general conclusion*.

*A man may do all ( as to external duties and worship ) that a true Christian can, and when he hath done all, be but almost a Christian.*

You must know all the Commands of God, have an *intra* and an *extra* ; there is ( as I may say ) the body and the soul of the Command.

And accordingly there is an *internal* and an *external* worship of God.

Now the *internal* acts of worshipping of God, are to love God, to fear God,

to delight in God, to trust in  
God, &c.

The external acts of worshipping  
God, are by praying, teaching, hear-  
ing, &c.

Now there is a vast difference be-  
tween these internal and external acts  
of worship (and indeed such a differ-  
ence there is) that they distinguish  
altogether from the almost Christi-  
an, the sincere believer from the un-  
true and professor; and indeed in this  
very thing, the main difference be-  
tween them doth lie.

1. Internal acts of worship are  
good, *propter fieri*; the goodness doth  
lie there intrinsically to the thing done;  
man cannot love God, nor fear God,  
but it will be imputed to him for a  
gracious act, and a great part of his  
holiness.

But now external acts of worship,  
are not denominated good, so much  
from the matter done, *propter fieri*,  
as from the manner of doing them;  
man cannot sin in loving and de-  
lighting in God, but he may sin in  
praying and hearing, &c. for want of  
due manner.

2. In-

2. *Internal Acts of Worship* put our goodness into *external*; it is our love, our fear of God, that makes our duties good.

3. They better the heart, and grow ten the degrees of a mans holiness; *external duties* do not always do so; a man may pray, and yet his heart grow ever the holier; he may hear the Word, and yet his heart never the softer; now the more a man fears God, the wiser he is, *Prov. 1. 7.* the more a man loves God, the holier he is; love is the perfection of holiness; we shall never be perfect in holiness, till we come to be perfect in love.

4. There is such an excellency in this *internal worship*, that he who mixes it with his *external duties*, is a true Christian when he doth lead; but without this mixture, he is but *almost a Christian*, that doth most.

*Internal Acts of Worship*, joyning with outward, sanctifie them, and make them accepted of God, though few *external Acts of Worship*, without outward, make them abhorred of God, though they be never so many.

So that though the almost Christian

do all those duties in hypocrisy; which a true Christian doth in sincerity; nay though in doing external duties, he may out-do the true Christian, (as the Comet makes a greater blaze than the true Stars: If he fast and mourn, *Baal's Priests* without their flesh) Yet he cannot do the internal duties that the meanest Christian can.

The almost Christian can pray, but cannot love God; he can teach or *Ec.* but he cannot take delight in God.

Mark *Jo's* querie concerning the hypocrite; *Will he delight himself in the Almighty?*

He will pray to the Almighty, but he delight himself in the Almighty?

He take pleasure in God?

Alas! he will not, he cannot.

Delight in God, ariseth from a suitableness between the faculty and the object; now none more unsuitable to God and a carnal heart.

Delight arises from the having what we desire, and from enjoying what we have; how then can he delight in God, neither enjoyeth, nor hath, nor desireth God?

Job 27.10.  
This is  
Christianorum  
propria  
virtus.

Hec propria est delectationis materia, si cum habeas quae desideraveris, desideratis perfruaris.  
Pine in loc.

De-

*Delight* in God is one of the high exercises of grace; and therefore he can he delight in God; that hath grace?

Why then should any Saint of God be discouraged, when he hears how the Almost Christian may go in way to heaven, when as he that is weakest true believer, that hath least true grace, goes farther than he for he believes in, and loves God.

Should the *Almost Christian* do (as to matter of external duties) if he had but the least true faith, the least sincerity of love to Christ, he would surely be saved; and should the true Christian do ten times more duties than he doth, yet had he no faith in Christ, and love to Christ, he would surely be rejected.

Oh therefore let not any weak believer be discouraged, though hypocrites may out-do them, and go beyond them in duty; for all their duties are done in hypocrisie, but your faith and love to God in duties, is proof of your sincerity.

I do not speak this to discourage any soul in the doing of duties; or

down outward performances, but  
justify the soul in the doing of them.  
As the Apostle saith, Covet earnestly 1 Cor. 12.  
best gifts, but I yet shew unto you a 32.  
excellent way: So I say, covet  
best gifts, covet to be much in du-  
much in prayer, much in hearing,  
But yet I shew you a more excellent  
and that is, the way of faith and  
pray much; but then believe  
much too. Hear much, read much,  
then love God much too. Delight  
the Word and Ordinances of God  
much, but then delight in the God of  
ordinances more.

And when you are most in duties as  
your use of them, Oh then be sure  
be above duties, as to your resting  
dependance upon them. Would  
be Christians indeed, altogether  
Christians? Oh then be much in the  
and exercise of Ordinances, but be  
much more in faith and dependance  
on Christ and his righteousness;  
when your obedience is most to the  
command, then let your faith be most  
on the promise.

The Professor rests in his duties,  
so is but almost a Christian; but  
you



you must be sure to rest upon the Lord Christ, this is the way to be altogether Christians, for if ye believe then are ye Abrahams seed, and heirs according to the promise.

And thus I have answered the first Querie; to wit, How far a man may go in the way to Heaven, and yet be but almost a Christian?

1. He may have much knowledge.
2. He may have great gifts.
3. He may have a high profession.
4. He may do much against sin.
5. He may desire grace.
6. He may tremble at the Word.
7. He may delight in the Word.
8. He may be a Member of the Church of Christ.
9. He may have great hopes of heaven.
10. He may be under great and visible changes.
11. He may be very zealous in the matters of Religion.
12. He may be much in prayer.
13. He may suffer for Christ.
14. He may be called of God.
15. He may in some sense have the Spirit of God.

16. He may have some kind of faith.

17. He may love the people of God.

18. He may go far in obeying the commands of God.

19. He may be in some sense sanctified.

20. He may do all (as to external duties) that a true Christian can, and yet be no better than almost a Christian.

### The second Question.

*Why, or whence is it, that many men go so far, or that they come to be almost Christians?*

First, It may be to answer the call of conscience; though few men have grace; yet all men have conscience.

Now do but observe and you shall see how far conscience may go in this work.

1. Conscience owns a God; and that this God must be worshipped and served by the creature. Atheists in practice we have many, such as the Apostle speaks of, *Tit. 1. 16. They profess they know God, but in works they deny him.*

But Atheists in judgement none can be; Tully a Heathen could say, *Nulla gens tam barbara, &c.*

Now there being such a light in con-

H

science

science, as to discover that there is a God, and that he must be worshipped by the help of further light, the light of the Word, a man may be enabled to do much in the wayes of God, and yet his heart without a dram of Grace.

2. Know this, that *natural conscience is capable of great improvements from the means of grace*; sitting under the Ordinances, may exceedingly heighten the endowments of conscience; though they do not sanctifie conscience, it may be much regulated; though it be not at all renewed, it may be *enlightned, convinced, and yet never savingly converted and changed.*

Ye read in *Heb. 6. 4.* of some that were once enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gifts, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. What work shall we call this? It could not be a saving work, a true change and conversion of state: for notwithstanding this enlightning, and tasting, and partaking, yet they are here said to *fall away, v. 6.*

Had it been a true work of grace, they could never have fallen away from that; a believer may fall, but he cannot fall away; he may fall souly, but

he can never fall finally, for *his* *Deut. 33.*  
*mouth are the everlasting arms*; his *27.*  
 is established in the strength of  
 prayer of Christ, that our faith *Luk. 22.*  
 not; nay he tells us expressly, that *32.*  
 eternal life which he gives, from  
 which *we shall never perish*, *Joh. 10. 28.*

This work then here spoken of  
 not be any saving work, because it  
 not an abiding work; for they that  
 under it, are said to fall away from  
 it, but though it be not a saving  
 work, yet it is a supernatural work; it  
 an improvement made by the word  
 on the conscience of men through  
 the power of the Spirit; and there-  
 fore they are said to *taste the good word*  
*of God*, and to be made *partakers of the*  
*life of God*; they have not the Spirit  
 dwelling in them savingly, but striving  
 with them, and working upon them  
 convincingly, to the awakening and  
 stirring conscience on work. And con-  
 science thus stirred, may carry a man  
 far in Religion, and in the duties  
 of the Gospel, and yet be but a natu-  
 ral conscience.

A *Common work of the spirit*, may  
 carry a man very much in the duties

of Religion, though it must be a special work of the spirit that leads a man to salvation; a man may have the assisting presence of the spirit, enabling him to preach and pray, and yet he may perish for want of the renewing presence of the spirit enabling him to believe: *Judas* had the former, and yet perished for want of the latter; he had the spirit assisting him to cast out Devils, but yet he had not the spirit renewing him, for he was carnal and out himself. Thus a man may have an improved conscience, and yet be a stranger to a renewed conscience; a conscience thus improved, may put a man very much upon duty.

I pray God none of us mistake which conscience thus improved by the work of the spirit for a conscience renewed by the spirit; the mistake is very easie, especially when a life of duties is the fruit of it.

3. *The conscience of a natural man; subject to distress and trouble; though a natural conscience is not sanctified by grace, yet it is often troubled at the trouble of conscience is not incident to believers only, but sometimes to unbelievers also. A believer's conscience*

times troubled when his sin is  
 pardoned; and a natural mans  
 conscience is troubled for sin, though  
 he is never freed from sin. God some-  
 times sets the Word home upon the  
 sinners conscience, and applies the ter-  
 rours of the Law to it, and this fills the  
 soul with fear and horror of death and  
 hell; now in this case the soul usually  
 takes it self to a life of duties, meer-  
 to escape trouble out of conscience.  
 When *Abraham* sets fire on *Juabs*  
 as corn-fields, then he runs to him; 2 Sam. 14.  
 though he refused before; so when  
30, 31.  
 he lets a spark of Hell (as it were)  
 upon the sinners conscience, in ap-  
 plying the terrours of the Word, this  
 gives the sinner to a life of duties  
 which he never minded before; The  
 ground of many a mans engaging in  
 Religion, is the trouble of his con-  
 science; and the end of his continuing  
 of the Religion, is the quieting of consci-  
 ence; if conscience would never check  
 us, God should never hear from him.  
 Natural conscience hath a voice,  
 that speaks aloud many times in the  
 sinners ears, and telleth him, this  
 is to be done, God must not

be forgotten, the *Commands* of God ought not to be slighted, living in sin will be the ruine of the soul; hence it is that a natural man runs to duties, and takes up a lifeless and graceless profession, that he may thereby silence conscience. As a man sick in his stomach, what ever sweet morsel he hath eaten, he brings up all; and although it was sweet in the eating, yet it is bitter in the rising.

So it fareth with the sinner, when he is Sermon-sick, or conscience-sick, though his sin was sweet in the practice, yet the thought of it riseth before upon the conscience, and then his profession of Religion is the pill he rouseth about in his mouth, to take away the bitterness of sins taste.

4. *Natural conscience enlightened by the Word, may discover to a man much of the misery of a natural state; though it doth effectually to bring him out of it, yet so as to make him restless and weary in it; it may shew a sinner his nakedness, and hereupon the soul runneth to a life of duties, thinking hereby to forget the misery of his case, and to make a covering for his nakedness. It is said,*



Gen. 3. 7. That when Adam and Eve  
 in Eden they were naked, they sewed Fig-  
 leaves together, and made themselves a  
 covering. So when once the sinner sees  
 his nakedness and vileness, by rea-  
 son of sin, whereas he should run to  
 Christ, and close with him, and beg his  
 righteousness for a covering, that the  
 shame of his nakedness do not appear, Rev.  
 19. 10. He rather runneth to a life of du-  
 ties and performances, and thus mak-  
 eth himself a covering with the fig-  
 leaves of a profession, without Christ tru-  
 ly embraced, and conscience at all re-  
 spected. Natural man would faine be his  
 own Saviour, and suppose a change  
 of state to be a thing within his own  
 power, and that the true work of  
 grace lieth in the leaving off the prac-  
 tice of sin, and taking up a life of du-  
 ties; and therefore upon this principle  
 hath many a graceless professor, but  
 it is not a sound believer; for he resteth in  
 his own performances, and hopeth  
 that will commend him to God. there  
 is a natural conscience may go that  
 is a difference is there be-  
 tween this natural conscience in Hypo-  
 crites and Sinners, and a renewed con-  
 science

science in believers? Or how may I know whether the workings of my conscience be the workings of nature only, or else of grace wrought in it? And how of these?

Ans.

I grant, that it is difficult to distinguish between the one and the other, and the difficulty hath a twofold rise. 1. It ariseth from that Hypocrisie that is in the best Saints; the weakest believer is no hypocrite, but yet there is some hypocrisie in the strongest believer; where there is most grace, there is some sin; and where there is most sincerity, yet there is some hypocrisie.

Now it is very incident to a tender conscience to misgive and mistrust in state upon the sight of any sin; when he sees hypocrisie break out in any duty or performance; then he complains: *Alas my heart is not renewed, it is but natural conscience enlightened, not by grace purged and changed.*

It ariseth from that resemblance there is between grace and hypocrisie; for hypocrisie is a resemblance of grace without substance, the likeness of grace without the life of grace. There is no grace but an hypocrite may have

*Phymation*  
made an  
Image so  
lively, that  
he deceived him-  
self, and  
taking the  
picture for  
a person,  
fell in love  
with the  
Picture.

some what like it; and there is no duty done by a Christian, but an hypocrite may out-strip him in it. Now when one that hath not true grace shall go farther than one that hath, this may well make the believer question whether his grace be true or not; or whether the workings of his conscience be not the workings of nature only, rather than of grace wrought in it. But to answer the Question, You may make a judgement of this in these even particulars.

1. If a natural mans conscience put him upon duty, he doth usually bound himself in the work of God: his duties are limited, his obedience is a limited obedience; he doth one duty, and neglecteth another; he picketh and chooseth among the commands of God; obeyeth one, and slighteth another. Thus much is enough, what need any more? if I do thus and thus, I shall go to Heaven at last.

But now where conscience is renewed by grace, there it is otherwise; Though there may be many weaknesses which accompany its duties, yet that soul never bounds it self in

working after God ; it never loves God so much, but still it would love him more ; nor seeks him so much, but still it would seek him more ; nor doth it *Psal. 119.* serve God so well, at any time, but still *20.* it makes conscience of serving him better. *A renewed conscience is a spring of universal obedience ;* *Psal. 119. 128.* for it seeth an infinite excellency, and goodness, and holiness in God, and therefore would fain have its service rise up towards some proportionableness to the object ; a God of infinite excellency and goodness, should have infinite love, faith conscience, a holy God should have service from a holy heart, faith conscience.

Now then, if I set bounds to my love to God, or to my service to God ; if I limit my self in my obedience to the holy God ; love one command, and slight another ; obey in one point, and yet lie cross in another ; then is all *Mat. 22.* I do but the working of a natural con-  
*37.* science. But on the other hand, if I *M. rk. 11.* love the Lord with my whole heart,  
*33.* and whole soul and serve him with all my might and strength ; *If I esteem all Gods precepts concerning all things to be right,*

and have respect to all the Com-  
mands, then is my love and service  
from a renewed conscience.

2. If a natural mans conscience check  
accuse for sin, then he seeketh to stop  
the mouth of it, but how to satisfy it,  
most of the natural mans duties are to  
still and stifle conscience.

But now the believer chuseth ra-  
ther to let conscience cry, than to stop  
the mouth of it, untill he can do it up-  
on good terms, untill he can fetch in  
satisfaction to it, from the blood of  
Jesus Christ, by fresh acts of faith, ap-  
prehended and applied.

The natural man seeketh to still the  
noise of conscience, rather than to re-  
move the guilt; the believer seeketh  
the removal of guilt by the applica-  
tion of Christs blood, and then conscience  
is quiet of it self. As a foolish man ha-  
ving a Mote safn into his eye, and ma-  
king it water, he wipeth away the wa-  
ter, and labours to keep it dry, but ne-  
ver searcheth his eye to get out the  
Mote; but a wise man mindeth not so  
much the wiping, as the searching his  
eye; somewhat is got in, and that cau-  
seth the watering, and therefore the  
cause must be removed. Now

Now then, if when conscience accuseth for sin, I take up a life of duties, a form of godliness to stop the mouth of conscience, and if hereupon conscience be still and quiet, then is this but a natural conscience; but if when conscience speaks, it will not be satisfied with any thing but the blood of Christ, and therefore I use duties to bring me to Christ; and if I beg the sprinkling of his blood upon conscience, and labour not so much to stop the mouth of it, as to remove guilt from it, then is this a renewed conscience.

3. There is no natural man, let him go never so far, let him do never so much in matters of Religion, but still he hath his *Joh. 12. 6.* Dalilah, his bosome lust. Judas went far, but he carried his covetousness *Mar. 6. 20.* along with him; Herod went far, he did many things under the force of John's Ministry, but yet there was one thing he did not: he did not put away his Brothers wife; his *Herodias* lay in his bosome still. Nay, commonly all the natural mans duties are to hide some sin, his profession is only made use of for a cover-shame.

But now the renewed conscience hateth



with all sin, as David did. I hate every  
 way: he regardeth no iniquity in  
 his heart: he useth duties, not to co-  
 ver sin, but to help work down, and  
 work out sin. Psal. 119.  
 128.  
 Psal. 66. 18.

Now then, if I profess Religion, if  
 I make mention of the Name of the  
 Lord, and make my boast of the Law, and  
 through breaking the Law dishonour  
 God: If I live in the love of any sin,  
 and make use of my profession to co-  
 ver it, then am I an hypocrite, and my  
 duties flow but from a natural consci-  
 ence: but on the other hand, If I name  
 the name of the Lord Jesus, and withall  
 depart from iniquity: if I use duties,  
 not to cover, but to discover and  
 mortifie sin, then am I upright before  
 God, and my duties flow from a re-  
 newed conscience. Rom. 2. 25.  
 2 Tim. 2.  
 19.

A natural man prides himself in  
 his duties: if he be much in duty, then  
 he is much lifted up under duty: so  
 did the Pharisee, Luk. 18. God, I thank  
 thee that I am not as other men are; and  
 why? where lay the difference? why,  
 I fast twice in the week, I give tythes of  
 all, &c. Luk. 18.  
 11, 12.

But now take a gracious heart, a  
 renewed



renewed conscience, and when his duties are at highest, then is his heart lowest. Thus it was with the Apostle Paul, he was much in service, *in season, and out of season*, preaching up the Lord Jesus with all boldness and confidence, and yet very humble in his sense of his own unworthiness and all; *I am not worthy to be called an Apostle*, 1 Cor. 15. 9. *To me who am less than the least of all Saints, is this ministry given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*, Eph. 3. 8. And again, 1 Tim. 1. 15. *Of sinners I am chief*. Thus a believer, when he is highest in duties, then he is lowest in humility; duty puffeth up the hypocrite, but a believer comes away humbled; and why? because the hypocrite hath had no visions of God, he hath seen only his own gifts and parts, and this exaltes him; but the believer hath seen God, and enjoyed communion with God, and this humbleth him: Communion with God, though it be very refreshing, yet it is also very abasing and humbling to the creature. Hieron observeth on Zeph. 1. 1. where it is said, that *Cushi* was when

Son of Gedaliah, the Son of Amariah. That *Amariah* signifies, the Word of the Lord; *Gedaliah* signifies, the greatness of the Lord, and *Cushi* is interpreted of humility, or my *Æthiopian*. So that, from the word of the Lord, cometh a sight of the greatness of the Lord, and from a sight of the greatness of the Lord, cometh humility.

Now then, if I pride my self in any performance, and am puffed up under my performances, then have I not seen nor met with God in any duty. But on the other hand, if when my gifts are at the highest, my heart is at lowest; if when my spirit is most raised, my heart is most humbled; if in the midst of all my services, I can maintain a sense of my own unworthiness; if *Cushi* be the Son of *Gedaliah*, then have I seen and had communion with God in duty, and my performances are from a renewed conscience.

5. Look what that is to which the heart doth secretly render the glory of a duty, and what is the principle of the duty; in *Hab.* 1. 16. ye read of them that Sacrifice to their Net, and burn incense to their drag; where the glory of an action is rendered to

to a mans self, the principle of that duty  
 Ecc. 1. 7. on is self: all Rivers run into the Sea,  
 that is an argument they came from the  
 Sea, so when all a mans duties terminate  
 in self, then is self the principle of all.

Now all the natural mans duties  
 run into himself; he was never by a  
 thorough work of grace truly cast out  
 of himself, and brought to deny him-  
 self; and therefore he can rise no  
 higher than himself in all he doth; he  
 was never brought to be *poor in spirit*,  
 and so to live upon another, to be car-  
 ried out of all duties to Jesus Christ.

But the Believer giveth the glory  
 of all his services to God; whatever  
 Ps. 115. 1. strength or life there is in duty, God  
 hath all the glory; for he is by grace  
 outed of himself, and therefore seeth  
 no excellency or worthiness in self.

*I laboured more abundantly than they  
 all,* saith the Apostle; but to whom  
 doth he ascribe the glory of this? to  
 self? No, *yet not I,* saith he, *but the*  
*grace of God which was with me,* 1 Cor.  
 15. 10. When ever the grace of Christ  
 is wrought in the heart as a principle  
 of duty, you shall find the soul when  
 it is most carried out, with a *yet not I*

in the mouth of it, *I live, yet not I; I Gal. 2.20.*

*lived more abundantly than all; yet*

*I; self is disclaimed, and Christ*

*most advanced, when it is from grace*

*that the heart is quickned; the twenty*

*four Elders cast their Crowns at Christs*

*feet, Rev. 4.10.*

There are two things very hard;

one is to take the shame of our sins, to

our selves; the other is to give the

glory of our services to Christ.

Now then, *If I sacrifice to my own*

*will, if I aim at my own credit or pro-*

*fit, and give the glory of all I do to*

*my self, then I do I owe to the flesh, and*

*am never yet cast out of self, but act*

*only from a natural conscience; but*

*Gal. 6. 8.*

*I give the glory of all my strength*

*and life in duty only to God, (if I magi-*

*fice grace in all, and can truly say in*

*all I do, yet not I, then am I truly cast*

*out of self and do what I do with a*

*renewed conscience.*

*16. Though a natural conscience may*

*put a man much upon service, yet it nat-*

*urly professes to the attainment of a billi-*

*ty, so that he can have an unsatis-*

*fied heart under all; How long was*

*James a Professor and yet not one*

*drum*

*but a*

dream of that grace he had got? *The Mar. 25. 3. foolish Virgins* (you know) took their lamps, but took no oyl in their vessels, that is, they looked more after a profession, than after sanctification.

But now when a renewed conscience putteth a man upon duty, it is succeeded with the growth of holiness; as grace helpeth to the doing of duty, so duty helpeth to the growing of grace; a believer is the more holy, and the more heavenly, by his being much in duties.

Now then, if I am much in a life of duties, and yet a stranger to a life of holiness; if I maintain a high profession, and yet have not a true work of sanctification; if (like children in the Rickets) I grow big in the head, but weak in the feet, then have I gifts and parts, but no grace; and though I am much in service, yet have I but a natural conscience; but on the other hand, if the holiness of my conversation carrieth a proportion to my profession; if I am not a *blarney* of the word only, but a *doer* of it; if grace groweth in seasons of duty, then do I act in the things of God from a renewed conscience.

7. And

7. And lastly, If a natural conscience be the spring of duty, why then runs this spring fastest at first, and so abateth, and at last drieth up? but if a renewed conscience, a sanctified heart be the spring of duty, then this spring will never dry up; it will run always, from first to last, and run quicker at last than first. I know thy works, and the last to be more than the first, Rev. 2: 19. The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that bath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger, Job 17. 9.

But you will say, Why doth that man abate and languish in his duties, that doth them from a natural conscience, more than he that doth them from a renewed conscience? Quest.

The reason is, because they grow Answ.  
upon a failable root, a decaying root, and that is nature; nature is a fading root, and so are all its fruits fading; but the duties done by a renewed conscience, are fruits that grow upon a lasting root, and that is Christ; gifts have their root in nature, but grace hath its root in Christ; and therefore the weakest grace, shall out-live the greatest gifts and parts, because there

there is life in the root of one, and not in the root of the other; gifts and grace differ like the leather of your shooe, and the skin of your feet; take a pair of shooes that have the thickest soles, and if you go much in them, the leather weareth out, and in a little time a mans foot cometh to the ground; but now a man that goeth bare-foot all his days, the skin of his feet doth not wear out; why should not the sole of his foot sooner wear out, than the sole of his shooe? for the leather is much thicker than the skin; the reason is, because there is life in the one, and not in the other; there is life in the skin of the foot, and therefore that holdeth out, and groweth thicker and thicker, harder and harder; but there is no life in the sole of his shooe, and therefore that wear-eth out, and waxeth thinner and thinner; so it is with gifts and grace.

Now then, if I decay and abate, and grow weary of a profession, and fall away at last; *If I begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh,* then was all I did from a *viaticall* conscience; but if I grow and hold out, if I *persevere to the end*, and my

last



let works be more than my first, than do  
act from a renewed conscience.

And thus I have in seven things answered that question, viz. if conscience may go thus far in putting a man upon duties, than, what difference is there between this natural conscience in hypocrites and sinners, and renewed conscience in believers?

And that is the first answer to the main Query; viz. *Whence is it that many men go so far, as that they come to be almost Christians.*

It is to answer the call of conscience.

Secondly, *It is from the power of the word under which they live;* though the Word doth not work effectually upon all, yet it hath a great power upon the hearts of sinners to reform them, though not to renew them.

1. It hath *vim discriminationis*, a discerning, discovering power, Heb. 4. 12. *The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* This is the glass where every man may see what man-

ner of man he is; as the light of the Sun discovers the little Motes, so the light of the World shining into conscience, discovers little sins.

2. The word hath *vim legislativam*, the power of a Law; it gives law to the whole soul, binds conscience; it is therefore frequently called the Law in Scripture, *unless thy Law had been my delight, &c. To the Law, and to the Testimony*, this is spoken of the whole word of God, which is therefore called a law, because of its binding power upon the conscience.

3. It hath *vim judicativam*, a judging power: Job 12. 48. *The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day*; the sentence that God will pass upon sinners hereafter, is no other than what the word passeth upon them here; the judgement of God is not a day wherein God will pass any new sentence, but it is such a day wherein God will make a solemn publique ratification of the judgement passed by the Ministry of the word upon souls here; this I gather clearly from Mat. 18. 18. *Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven*.

men; and whatever ye shall loose on  
earth, shall be loosed in heaven; so that by  
bringing a mans heart to the word,  
and trying it by that, he may quickly  
know what that sentence is that God  
will pass upon his soule on the last day;  
as the judgement of the word is  
now, such will the judgement of God  
be concerning him in the last day.

Indeed there is a two-fold power  
in the word.

It hath *vim Plasticam*, &  
*vim Salvificam*.

A begetting and saving power; but  
is put forth only upon some.

But the other is more extensive,  
and hath a great causality upon a pro-  
portion of goodness, even among them  
that have no grace.

A man that is under this three-fold  
power of discerning Law and Judge-  
ment, that hath his heart ransacked  
and discovered, his conscience bound  
and awed, his state and sinful conditi-  
on judged and condemned, may take up  
resolution of a new life, and convert  
himself to a great profession of Reli-

3. A man may go far in this course of  
profession

profession from affection of applause  
credit, and to get a name in the world  
as it is said of the Pharisees, They  
to pray in the Market-places, and in the  
corners of the streets, to be seen of men.

Mat. 6. 5.

Many are of Machiavels principle  
that the appearance of virtue is to be  
fought; because though the use of it is  
a trouble, yet the credit of it is a help.

Jerome in his Epistle to Julian, calls  
such popularis aurea villa municipis, the  
base bondslaves of common fame. Many  
a man doth that for credit, that he  
will not do for conscience; and owns  
Religion more for the sake of lust, than  
for the sake of Christ, thus making  
Gods stream to turn the Devils Mill.

Fourthly, It is from a desire of sal-  
vation; there is in all men a desire of  
salvation; it is natural to every be-  
ing, to love and seek its own preser-  
vation; who will shew us any good? Ps.  
4. 6. This is the Language of Nature  
seeking happiness to its self.

Many a man may be carried so  
out in the desires of salvation as to  
many things to obtain it.

So did the young man; Good Master  
what good thing shall I do that I may

inherit eternal life? he went far, and did much, obeyed many commands, and all out of a desire of salvation: so then, put these together, and there is an answer to that question.

*The call of Conscience.*

*The power of the Word.*

*The affection of Credit: and*

*The desire of Salvation.*

These may carry a man so far as to be almost a Christian.

The third Question propounded, is this.

Thirdly, *Whence is it that many are almost Christians, when they have gone thus far? what is the cause of this?*

I might multiply Answers to this Question; but I shall instance in two only, which I judge the most material.

First, *It is for want of right and sound conviction*; if a man be not thoroughly convinced of sin, and his heart truly broken, whatever his profession of godliness may be, yet he will be sure to miscarry; every work of conviction is not a through work; there are convictions that are only natural and rational, but not from the powerful work of the Spirit of God.

Rational  
conviction-  
on, what?

Rational conviction, is that which proceeds from the working of a natural conscience, charging guilt from the light of nature, by the help of those *κοινὰς ἐνοχίας*, those common principles of reason that are in all men: This is the conviction you read of Rom. 2. 14, 15. It is said, that the Gentiles who had not the Law, yet had their consciences bearing witness, and accusing, or excusing one another; though they had not the light of Scripture, yet had they conviction from the light of nature; now by the help of the Gospel-light, these convictions may be much improved, and yet the heart not renewed.

Spiritual  
conviction-  
on, what?

But then there is a spiritual conviction, and this is that work of the Spirit of God upon the sinners heart by the Word, whereby the guilt and filth of sin is fully discovered, and the woe and misery of a natural state, distinctly set home upon the conscience, to the dread and terror of the sinner, whilst he abides in that state and condition.

And this is the conviction that is a sound and thorough work; many have their convictions, but not this spiritual conviction.

LEONARD

I

Now



Now you'l say, Suppose I am at any Querie. time under conviction, how shall I know whether my conviction be only from a natural conscience, or whether they be from the Spirit of God?

I should digress too much to draw *Answer.* out the solution of this question, to its full length; I shall therefore in five things only lay down, the most considerable difference between the one and the other.

I. Natural convictions reach chiefly to open and scandalous sins, sins against the light of nature; for natural conviction can reach no farther than natural light.

But spiritual conviction reaches to secret, inward, and undiscerned sins, such as Hypocrisie, Formality, Luke-warmness, Diableness, and Hardness of heart, &c.

Observe then, whether your trouble for sin, looks inward as well as outward; and reaches not only to open sins, but to secret lusts, to inward and spiritual sins; and if so, this is a sure sign of the work of the Spirit, because the trouble occasioned by these sins bears a more immediate relation to the holiness of God, who only is offended by them, they being such as none else can see or know.



**ROM. 2.** Natural convictions deal only with  
 a man's conversation, not with his state  
 and condition; with sins actual, not  
 original; but spiritual convictions reach  
 to all sins, to sins of heart, as well as  
 sins of life; to the sin of our nature, as  
 well as the sins of practice; to the sin  
 that is born in us, as well as the sin  
 that is done by us.

Where the Spirit of the Lord com-  
 eth to work effectually in a soul, he  
 holdeth the glass of the Law before  
 the sinners eyes, and openeth his eye  
 to look into the glass, and to see  
 that deformity and filthiness that is  
 in his heart and nature.

The Apostle Paul said, I had  
 known sin but by the Law, Rom. 7.

How can this be true, that he had  
 known sin but by the Law, when  
 the light of nature discovers sin? It

**Rom. 2.** said of the Gentiles, That having  
 the Law, they are a Law unto themselves.

This sin therefore that the Apostle  
 speaks of, is not to be understood  
 of sin actual, but of sin original; I had  
 known the pollution of nature, the  
 fountain of sin that is within, this  
 I had not known but by the Law.

Indeed this is a discovery that natural  
 light cannot make; it is true the Phi-  
 losopher could say, *πῶς τὸν πᾶν ἡγοῦντο* Timon apud  
*ἐν τῷ ἐνιδυμῷ ἐστὶν*, that lust is the first Laertium.  
 and chief of all sins; but I cannot think  
 he meant it of Original sin, but of the  
 ordinariness of appetite and desire at first;  
 for I find that the wisest of the Philo-  
 sophers, understood nothing of Origin-  
 al sin; hear Seneca, *Erras si tecum vitia*  
*conscii putas, supervenerunt, ingesta sunt*;  
 sin is not born with thee, but brought  
 in since. *Tam sine vitio quam sine virtute*  
*conscimur.*

Quintilian saith, It is more mar-  
 vel that any one man sins, than that all  
 men should live honestly; sin is fo-  
 against the nature of men; how blind  
 were they in this point? and so was  
 Paul, till the Spirit of the Lord dis-  
 covered it to him by the Word. And  
 indeed this is a discovery proper to  
 the Spirit. It is he that makes the sin-  
 ner see all the deformity and filthiness  
 that is within; it is he that pulleth off  
 all the sinners rags; and makes him see  
 his naked and wretched condition; it  
 is he that shews us the blindness of the  
 mind, the stubbornness of the will,

the disorderliness of the affections, the searedness of the conscience, the Plague of our hearts, and the sin of our natures, and therein the desperateness of our state.

3. *Natural convictions* carry the soul out to look more on the evil that comes by sin, than on the evil that is in sin; so that the soul under this conviction is more troubled at the dread of Hell, and wrath, and damnation, than at the vileness and heinous nature of sin.

But now *spiritual convictions* work the soul into a greater sensibleness of the evil that is in sin, than of the evil that comes by sin; the dishonour done to God by walking contrary to his will, the wounds that are made in the heart of Christ, the grief that the Holy Spirit of God is put to, this wounds the soul more than a thousand Hells.

4. *Natural convictions* are not durable, they are quickly worn out; they are like a slight cut in the skin, that bleeds a little, and is sore for the present, but is healed again, and in a few dayes not so much as a scar to be seen.

But *spiritual convictions* are durable, they cannot be worn out, they abide

the soul till they have reached their end, (which is the *change* of the sinner.)

The *convictions* of the spirit are like a deep wound in the flesh that goes to the bone, and seems to endanger the life of the Patient, and is not healed but with great skill; and when it is healed, leaves a scar behind it, that when the Patient is well, yet he can say, *Here is the mark of my wound which will never wear out.*

So a soul that is under *spiritual conviction*, his wound is deep, and not to be healed but by the great skill of the heavenly Physician; and when it is healed, there are the *tokens* of it remaining in the soul, that can never be worn out; so that the soul may say, *Here are the marks and signs of my conviction still in my soul.*

5. *Natural convictions make the soul* by of God; guilt works fear, and fear causes estrangedness; thus it was with Adam, when he saw his nakedness, Gen. 3. 18. he ran away and hid himself from God.

Now *spiritual convictions* drive not the soul from God, but unto God; Ephraims conviction was spiritual, and

and he runs to God, *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.* So that there is you see, a great difference between conviction and conviction; between that which is natural, and that which is spiritual; that which is common, and that which is saving.

Yea, such is the difference, that though a man hath never so much of the former, yet if he be without the latter, he is but *almost a Christian*; and therefore we have great reason to enquire more after this spiritual conviction. For,

1. *Spiritual conviction is an essential part of sound conversion*; conversion begins here; true conversion begins in convictions, and true convictions end in conversion.

Till the sinner be convinced of sin, he can never be converted from sin; Christs coming was as a Saviour, to dye for sinners; and the Spirits coming is to convince us as sinners, that we may close with Christ as a Saviour; till sin be thoroughly discovered to us, interest in the blood of Christ cannot rightly be claimed by us; nay, so long as sin is unseen, Christ will be

unsought. They that be whole, need not the Physitian, but they that are sick,

Mat. 9. 12.

2. Slight and common convictions, (when they are but skin-deep) are the cause of much Hypocrisie; Slight convictions may bring the soul to clasp about Christ, but not to close with Christ, and this is the guise of an Hypocrite; I know no other rise and spring of hypocrisie, like this of slight convictions; this hath filled the Church of Christ with Hypocrites.

Nay, it is not only the spring of Hypocrisie, but it is also the spring of Apostasie; what was the cause that the seed was said to wither away? Mat. 13. 5, 6. it was because it had no deepness of earth. Where there is through conviction, there is a depth of earth in the heart, and there the seed of the Word grows; but where convictions are slight and common, there the seed withers for want of depth; so that you see clearly in this one instance, whence it is, that many are but almost Christians, when they have gone so far in Religion, viz. for want of sound convictions.

Secondly, ( and this hath a near relation



lation to the former ) *It is for want of a through work of grace first wrought in the heart ; where this is not, all a mans following profession comes to nothing ; that Scholar is never like to read well, that will needs be in his Grammer, before he is out of his Primer ; Cloth that is not wrought well in the Loom, will neither wear well, nor wear long, it will do little service ; so that Christian that doth not come well off the Loom, that hath not a through work of grace in his heart, will never wear well, he will shrink in the wetting, and never do much service for God ; it is not the pruning of a bad tree, will make it bring forth good fruit ; but the tree must be made good, before the fruit can be good ,* Mat. 12. 33.

*He that takes up a profession of Religion with an unbroken heart, will never serve Christ in that profession with his whole heart.*

If there be not a true change in that mans heart , that yet goes far, and doth much in the wayes of God, to be sure he will either die an hypocrite or an Apostate.

Look

Mat. 23.  
20, 21.



Look as in nature, if a man be not well born, but prove crooked or mishapen in the birth, why he will be crooked as long as he lives; you may bolster or stuff out his cloaths to conceal it, but the crookedness, the deformity remains still; you may hide it, but you cannot help it; it may be covered, but it cannot be cured.

So it is in this case, If a man come into a profession of Religion, but be not right born; if he be not *begotten of John 3. 5. God, and born of the Spirit*; if there be not a through work of grace in his heart, all his profession of Religion will never mend him; he may be bolstered out by a life of duties, but he will be but an hypocrite at last, for want of a through work at first; a form of godliness may cover his crookedness, but will never cure it.

A man can never be a true *Christian*, nor accepted of God, though in the highest profession of Religion, without a work of grace in the heart. For,

1. *There must be an answerableness in the frame of that mans heart (that would be accepted of God) to the duties done by him; his spirit and affections within*

within must carry a proportion to his profession without; prayer without faith; obedience to the Law given, without fear and holy reverence of the Law-giver, God abhors: Acts of *internal* Worship, must answer the duties of *external* Worship.

Now where there is not grace wrought in the heart, there can never be any proportion or answerableness in the frame of that mans-heart, to the duties done by him.

2. *Those duties that find acceptance with God, must be done in sincerity.* God doth not take our duties by tale, nor judge of us according to the frequency of our performances, but according to the sincerity of our hearts in the performance. It is this that commends both the doer, and the duty to God; with sincerity, God accepts the least we do; without sincerity, God rejects the most we do, or can do: This is that temper of spirit which God highly delights in *Prov. 11. 20.* *They that are of a froward heart, are an abomination to the Lord; but such as are upright in their way are his delight.*

The Apottle gives it a great Epithete, he calls it in 2 Cor. 1. 12. *sinceritas* *Dei*, the sincerity of God, that is such a sincerity as is his special work upon the soul, setting the heart right and upright before him in all his wayes.

This is the Crown of all our graces, and the commendation of all our duties, thousands perish and go to Hell in the midst of all their performances and duties, meerly for want of a little sincerity of heart to God.

Now where there is not a change of state, a work of grace in the heart, there can be no sincerity to God-ward; for this is not *quid proveniens à natura*, it is not an herb that grows in *natures* garden; the heart of man is naturally deceitful, and desperately wicked, more opposite to sincerity than to any thing: as things corrupted, carry a greater dissimilitude to what they were, than to any thing else which they never were.

Jer. 17. 9.

God made man upright; now man voluntarily losing this, is become more dislike to himself than to any thing below himself; he is more like a Lion, a Wolf, a Bear, a Serpent, a Toad, than to a man in innocency.

So

So that it is impossible to find sincerity in any soul, till there be a work of grace wrought there by the Spirit of God; and hence it is that a man is but *almost a Christian* when he hath done all.

### The fourth Question.

*What is the reason that many go no farther in the profession of Religion, than to be Almost a Christian?*

Reaj. 1.

1. *It is because they deceive themselves in the truth of their own condition; they mistake their state, and think it good and safe, when it is bad and dangerous: A man may look upon himself as a member of Christ, and yet God may look upon him as a Vessel of wrath; as a Child of God by looking more upon his sins than his graces, more upon his failings than his faith, more upon in-dwelling lusts, than renewing grace, may think his case very bad, when yet it is very good; I am black, saith the Spouse, Cant. 1. 5. and yet saith Christ, O thou fairest among woman, v. 8. So the sinner by looking more upon his duties than his sins, may think he sees his name written in the book of life, and yet be in the account*

account of God a very Reprobate.

There is nothing more common, than for a man to *think himself something, when he is nothing*, and so he *deceives himself*: Many a man blesses himself in his interest in Christ, when he is indeed a stranger to him; many a man thinks his sin pardoned, when alas he is still in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity. Many a man thinks he hath grace, when he hath none; *There is* (saith Solomon) *that makes himself rich, and yet hath nothing*. This was the very temper of Laodicea; *Thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not* (pray mind that) *that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*.

*Thou knowest not* ] as bad as she was, she thought her state good; as poor as she was in grace, she thought she was rich; as miserable and naked as she was, as she thought she had need of nothing.

Now there are several riles or grounds of this mistake.

I'll name five to you.

First, *The desperate deceitfulness of the heart of every natural man*, Jer. 17. 9. *Supplantationum cor prae omni.*

the heart is deceitful above all things, the Hebrew is, עקב חלמכל the word (עקב) is the same with *Jacobs* name; now you know he was a supplanter of his brother *Esau*; he is rightly called *Jacob* (saith he) for he hath sup-  
 Gen. 27. 36. planted me these two times.

So the word signifies, to be fraudulent, subtil, deceitful, and supplanting. Thus is the heart of every natural man, עקב מכל deceitful above all things.

Psal. 52. 4. You read of the deceitfulness of the Tongue.

Mat. 13. 22. And of the deceitfulness of Riches.

Pro. 31. 30. And of the deceitfulness of Beauty.

Job 6. 15. And of the deceitfulness of Friends.

Rev. 20. 3. But yet the heart is deceitful above them all; nay you read of the deceitfulness of Satan; yet truly, a mans heart is a greater deceiver than he; for he could never deceive a man, if his own heart did not deceive him.

Now it is from hence that a man presumes upon the goodness of his case, from the desperate treachery of his own heart.

How common is it for men to boast of the goodness of their hearts? I

thank



ank God, though I do not make such a  
 and pretence as some do, yet I have  
 good a heart as the best. O do but  
 in Solomon in this case, be that trust- Prov. 28.  
 in his own heart is a fool: Will any 25.

wise man commit his money to a Cut-  
 throfe? will he trust a Cheat? It is a  
 good rule, *MEMINTO DIVISOR*, remember  
 to distrust; and it was *Austins* prayer,  
*Domine libera me à meipso*. That man  
 that trusts to his own heart, shall be  
 sure to find himself deceived at last.

Secondly, This mistake arises from  
 the pride of a mans spirit; there is a  
 proud heart in every natural man;  
 there was much of this pride in *Adams*  
 sin, and there is much of it in all *A-*  
*Adams* sons; it is a radical sin, and from  
 hence arises this over-weening opini-  
 on of a mans state and condition; *So-*  
*lomon* saith, Be not righteous overmuch. Eccl. 7.16.  
*Austin* speaking occasionally of those *Aug. Sent.*  
 words, saith, It is not *justitia sapiens*, 365.  
 but *superbia presumentis*; not meant  
 of the righteousness of the wise man,  
 but of the pride of the presumptuous  
 man. Now in this sense every carnal  
 man is righteous overmuch, though  
 he hath none of that righteousness  
 which



which commends him to God, ( viz. *the righteousness of Christ* ), yet he hath too much of that *righteousness* which commends him to himself, and that is *self-righteousness*.

A proud man hath an eye to see his *beauty*, but not his *deformity*; his *parts*, but not his *spots*; his *seeming righteousness*, but not his *real wretchedness*.

It must be a *work of grace* that must shew a man the want of grace. The haughty eye looks upward, but the humble eye looks downward, and therefore this is the believers Motto,

Eph. 3. 8. *The least of Saints, the greatest of Sinners*; but the carnal mans Motto is, 15. *I thank God I am not as other men.* Luk. 18. 11

Thirdly, Many deceive themselves with common grace instead of saving, through that resemblance that is between them; as many take counterfeit money for currant coyn, so do too many take common grace for trae. In similibus

1 Sam. 21. *facilis est deceptio.* Saul took the Devil for Samuel, because he appeared in the Mantle of Samuel; so many take common grace for saving, because it is like saving grace; a man may be under a supernatural work, and yet fall short of

(viz) a saving work; the first raiseth nature, the second only reneweth nature; though every saving work of the Spirit be supernatural, yet every supernatural work of the Spirit is not saving, and hence many deceive their own souls, by taking a *supernatural work* for a *saving work*.

Fourthly, *Many mistake a profession of Religion for a work of conversion, and the out-side reformation for a sure sign of the inward regeneration.* If the out-side of the cup be washed, then they think all is clean, though it be never so foul within. This is the common Rock that so many souls split upon, to their eternal hazard, taking up a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

2 Tim. 3. 5.

Fifthly, *Want of a home application of the Law of God to the heart and conscience, to discover to a man the true state and condition he is in.*

Where this is wanting, a man will sit down short of a true work of grace, and will reckon his case better than it is. That is a notable passage which the Apostle hints concerning himself; *I was alive without the Law once, but when the Commandment came, sin revived, and I died,* Rom. 7. 9.

Here

Here you have an account of the different apprehensions Paul had of his condition, with and without the word.

Phil. 3: 5, 6. 1. Here is his apprehension of his condition without the Word, *I was alive* (saith he) *without the Law*; Paul had the Law, for he was a Pharisee, and they had the form of knowledge, and of the truth of the Law; therefore when he saith, he was *without the Law*, you must not take him literally, but spiritually; he was without the power and efficacy of it upon his heart and conscience, convincing and awakening, and discovering sin; and so long as this was his case, he doubted not of his state, he was confident of the goodness of his condition; this he hinted when he saith, *I was alive*: but then,

2. Here is his apprehension of his condition with the Word, and that is quite contrary to what it was before; *when the Commandment came* (saith he) *then sin revived, and I dyed*.

When the Word of the Lord came with power upon his soul, when the Spirit of God set it home effectually upon his conscience, that is meant by *the coming of the Commandment*, then  
sin

revived, and I dyed, that is, I saw the  
separateness of my case, and the fil-  
thiness of all my self-righteousness.

Then my hope ceased, and my con-  
fidence failed, and as before I thought  
my self alive, and my sin dead, so when  
God had awakened conscience by the  
word, then I saw my sin alive and pow-  
erful, and my self dead and miserable.

So that this is the first reason why  
men go no farther in the profession of  
religion, than to be almost Christians.

It is because they mistake their state,  
and think it good when it is not;  
which mistake hath a five-fold rise.

*A deceitful heart.*

*A proud spirit.*

*Taking common grace for saving.*

*Outward Reformation, for true Rege-  
neration.*

*Want of a home application of the Law  
of God to the heart and conscience.*

2. It is from Satans cunning, who if  
he cannot keep sinners in their open pro-  
phaneness, then he labours to persuade  
them to take up with a form of godliness:  
If he cannot entice them on in their  
lusts, with a total neglect of heaven,  
then he entices them to such a pro-  
fession

feſſion as is ſure to fall ſhort of heaven. He will conſent to the leaving ſome ſin, ſo as we do but keep the reſt, and to the doing ſome duties, ſo as we neglect the reſt: Nay rather than part with his intereſt in the ſoul, he will yield far to our profeſſion of Religion and conſent to any thing but our conversion, and cloſing with Chriſt for ſalvation; he cares not which way we come to hell, ſo as he gets us but thither at laſt.

Reaſ. 3.

3. *It is from worldly and carnal policy* this is a great hindrance to many; policy many times enters *Caveats* againſt piety. *Jehu* will not part with *his calves*, leſt he hazard his Kingdom.

Among many men there would be more zeal and honeſty, were there leſs deſign and policy. There is an honeſt policy that helps Religion, but carnal policy hinders it.

Mat. to 16

Gen 3. 1.

We are commanded to be wiſe as ſerpents; now the ſerpent is the ſubtilleſt of creatures; but then we muſt be innocent as Doves; if Piety be without Policy it wants ſecrecy; if Policy be without Piety, it wants integrity; Piety without Policy, is too ſimple to be ſafe; and Policy without

with

about Piety, is too subtil to be good.

men be as wise, as prudent, as  
as watchful as they will, but  
let it be in the way of God, let it  
joyned with holiness and integrity.

That is a cursed wisdom that forbids  
man to lanch any further out in the  
of Religion, than he can see the  
end, lest he be taken in a storm, be-  
he can make safe to shore again.

4. *There is some lust espoused in the Reas. 4.*

that hinders a hearty close with  
Christ: though they bid fair, yet they

are not to Gods terms; the young Mar. 19.

man would have eternal life, and he bids 20.

for it, a willing obedience to every  
command but one: but only one;

and will not God abate him one? is

so severe? will he not come down

little in his terms, when man rises so

high? must man yield all? will God

yield nothing?

No, my brethren, he that under-

stands for heaven, shall as surely lose it,

as he that will give nothing for it: he

that will not give all he hath, part with Mar. 23.

for the Pearl of price, shall as surely 45, 46.

lose it, as he that never once

steals it.



The not coming up to Gods terms is the ruine of thousands of soules; nay, it is that upon which all do perish, do perish; a naked sinner to a naked Christ; a bleeding broken sinner, to a bleeding broken Christ, these are Gods terms.

Most Professors are like Iron between two equal Loadstones; God draws, and they propend toward God; and the World draws, and they incline to the World; they are between both, they would not leave God for the World, if they might not be engaged to leave the World for God.

But if they must part with all, with every lust, every darling, every beloved sin, why then the Spirit of God possesses them, and God is forsaken of them.

2 Tim. 4.  
10.

My brethren, this is the great reason why many that are come to be almost Christians, go no farther; some beloved lust or other hinders them, and after a long and high profession parts them and Christ for ever; *they did run well*, but here it is that they give out, and after all fall short, perish to eternity.

Gal. 5.



Thus having answered these four questions; viz.

1. How far a man may go in the way to heaven, and yet be but almost a Christian?

2. Whence is it that a man goeth so far as to be almost a Christian?

3. Whence is it that a man is but almost a Christian, when he hath gone thus far?

4. What is the Reason men go no farther in Religion, than to be almost Christians.

I proceed now to the Application.

1. That salvation is not so easie a thing *Infer. 1.*

as it is imagined to be; this is attested by our Lord Christ himself, Mat. 7. 14.

Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it.

The gate of conversion is a very strait gate, and yet every man that

would be saved eternally, must enter in at this strait gate; for salvation is

impossible without it. Except a man be

born again (ἀναγεννηθῇ, born from above) Joh 3. 3.

he cannot see the Kingdom of God.

Not that this gate is strait simply, and in respect of it self; no, for converting grace is free, the gate of mercy

stands open all the day long: in the ten-

- Mat. 22. <sup>3, 5.</sup> *Christ doth not say, If such and such*  
 A&. 13. <sup>46.</sup> *will come to me, I will not cast them*  
 Joh. 6. 37. *out; but him that cometh unto me (he be*  
                   *who or what he will, if he hath a heart to*  
                   *close with me) I will in no wise cast him out,*  
                   *he saith not, If this or that man will,*  
                   *here is water of life for him; but, If any*  
 Rev. 22. <sup>17.</sup> *man will, let him take the water of life*  
                   *freely. Christ grudgeth mercy to none;*  
                   *though salvation was dearly purchased*  
                   *for us, yet it is freely proffered to us.*

So that the gate which leadeth to life,  
 is not strait on Christs part, or in re-  
 spect of its self, but it is strait in respect  
 of us, because of our lusts and corrupti-  
 ons, which make the entrance difficult,  
 a needles eye is big enough for a thred  
 to pass through, but it is a strait pas-  
 sage for a cable rope; either the needles  
 eye must be enlarged, or the cable rope  
 must be untwisted, or the entrance is  
 impossible. So it is in this case; the  
 gate of conversion is a very strait pas-  
 sage for a carnal corrupt sinner to go in  
 at, the soul can never pass through with  
 any one lust beloved and espoused,  
 and therefore the sinner must be un-  
 twisted

twisted from every lust; he must lay aside the love of every sin; or he can never enter in at this gate, for it is a strait gate. And when he is in at this strait gate, he meereth with a narrow way to walk in; so our Lord Christ saith, *Narrow is the way that leadeth to life*; and what way is this but the way of sanctification? for without holiness, no man shall ever see the Lord. Heb. 12.

14.

Now this way of Sanctification is a very narrow way; for it lies over the neck of every lust, and in the exercise of every grace, subduing the one, and improving the other; dying daily, and yet living daily; dying to sin, and living to God, this is the way of sanctification: and oh how few are there who walk in this way! the broad way hath many Travellers in it, but this narrow way is like the wayes of Canaan in the dayes of Shamgar; it is said, *Judg. 5. 6. in the dayes of Shamgar the son of Anath, the high wayes were unoccupied, and the Travellers walked through by-wayes*; in the Hebrew, it is *דרך קצר דרך* through crooked wayes; the way of holiness is by the most an unoccupied way, so saith the

Prophet, Isa. 35. 8, 9. *A way shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness, the unclean shall not pass over it; no Lyon shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, but the redeemed shall walk there; the unclean, and the Lyon, and the ravenous beast, they are in the crooked wayes; none but the redeemed of the Lord walk in the way of the Lord.*

*Ad Caeleste  
Regnum  
pauci de-  
ducuntur.*

It is no wonder then, that our Lord Christ saith of life, that few there be that find it, when as the gate is strait, and the way narrow, that leadeth to it; many pretend to walk in the narrow way, but they never entered in at the strait gate; and many pretend to have entered in at the strait gate, but they walk not in the narrow way.

It is a very common thing for a man to perish upon a mistake of his way; to go on in those paths that take hold of Hell, and yet hope to find Heaven at last; those twenty paths forementioned run into destruction, and yet many chuse them, and walk in them as the way of salvation. As many profane and open sinners perish by chusing the way of death; so many formal profes-

fors perish by mistaking the way of life;  
 this I gather from that our Lord  
 Christ saith, Few there be that find it; 1 Cor. 9.  
 which doth clearly imply, what in <sup>24.</sup> *Facilis di-*  
 Luke 13 24. he doth plainly expresse, *scensus Ad*  
*viz.* that many seek it, many seek to en- *uermi*; Sed  
 ter in, and yet are not able; many run *revocare*  
 far, and yet do not so run as to obtain; *gradum*;  
 many bid fair for the Pearl of Price, *superasq;*  
 and yet go without it; Hell is had with *evadere ad*  
 ease, but the Kingdom of Heaven suffers *auras, Hic*  
 violence, Mat. 11. 12. *labor, hoc*  
*opus est.*

2. If many go thus far in the way to *Inser. 2.*  
 Heaven, and yet miscarry; oh then what  
 shall be the end of them who fall short of  
 these! If he shall perish who is almost a  
 Christian, what shall he do, who is not  
 at all a Christian? If he that owneth  
 Christ, and professeth Christ, and leav-  
 eth many sins for Christ, may be dam-  
 ned notwithstanding; what then shall  
 his doom be, who disowneth Christ,  
 and refuseth to part with one sin, one  
 lust, one oath for Christ; nay, that open-  
 ly blasphemeth the precious name of  
 Christ! if he that is outwardly sanctified,  
 shall yet be eternally rejected, what  
 will the case be of such as are openly  
 unsanctified; that have not only the

plague of an hard heart within, but also the plague-sores of a prophane life without? If the formal Professor must be shut out, surely then the filthy adulterer, swinish drunkard, the cheap swearer, the profane Sabbath breaker, the foul-mouth'd scoffer, yea, and every carnal sinner much more; if there be a *wo* to him that falleth short of heaven, then how sad is the *wo* to him who falls short of them that fall short of Heaven? Ah that God would make this an awakening word to sinners that are asleep in sin, without the least fear of death, or dread of damnation!

Use of  
Examin.

Are there many in the World, that are almost, and yet but almost Christians? why then it is time for us to call our own condition into question, and to make a more narrow scrutiny into the truth of our spiritual estate; what it is, whether it be right or no; whether we are sound and sincere in our profession of Religion or no. When our Lord Christ told his Disciples, One of you shall betray me, every one began presently to reflect upon himself; Master is it I? Master is it I? So should we do, when the Lord discovers to us from his word, how many there are under



let the profession of Religion that  
 but almost Christians; we should  
 that way reflect upon our heart, Lord  
 is my heart unsound? am I but  
 almost a Christian? am I one of them  
 that shall miscarry at last? am I an hy-  
 pocrite under a profession of Religio-  
 n? have I a form of godliness with-  
 out the power? and there are two questions of very great  
 importance, which we should every  
 one of us often put to our selves. *What am I?*  
*Where am I?* What am I a child of God  
 or not? and sincere in Religion, or am  
 I only an hypocrite under a Profession?  
 1. *Where am I?* am I yet in a na-  
 tural state, or in a state of grace? am I  
 yet in the old root; in old Adam; or  
 am I in the root Christ Jesus, and in  
 the Covenant of works; that ministers  
 only wrath and death? or am I in the  
 Covenant of grace, that ministers life  
 and peace? Indeed this is the first thing a man  
 should look at; there must be a change  
 of state before there can be a change  
 of heart; we must be men under a



Ezek. 36.

36.

change of Covenant, before we can be under a change of condition: For the *new heart*, and the *new spirit* is promised in the *new covenant*; there is nothing of that to be heard of in the *old*; now a man must be under the *new Covenant*, before he can receive the blessing promised in the *new Covenant*; he must be in a *new Covenant state*, before he can receive a *new Covenant heart*; no mercy, no pardon, no change, no conversion, no grace dispensed out of Covenant: therefore this should be our great inquiry; for if we know not where we are, we cannot know what we are; and if we know not what we are, we cannot be what we should be, viz: *altogether Christians*. Let me then I beseech you press this duty upon you that are Professors; try your own hearts; examine your selves whether you are in the faith, prove your own souls. I urge this upon most cogent Arguments.

1. Because many rest in a notion of godliness, and outward shews of Religion, and yet remain in their natural condition; many are bearers of the Word, but not doers of it, and so deceive their own souls; some neither bear nor do; these

are

A X

are

the prophane sinners; some both bear and do, these are true believers; some bear, but they do not do, these are Hypocritical Professors.

He that slightes the Ordinances, cannot be a true Christian; but yet it is possible a man may own them, and profess them, and yet be no true Christian, who would trust to a profession, that shall see Judas a Disciple, an Apostle a Preacher of the Gospel, one that casts out Devils, to be cast out himself? He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that Circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, and Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God. Rom. 2.28.

2. Because Errors in the first foundations are very dangerous; If we be not right in the main, in the fundamental work; if the foundation be not laid in grace in the heart, all our following profession comes to nothing, the house is built upon a sandy foundation, and though it may stand for a while, yet when the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon it, great will be the fall of it. Mar. 7.17.

3. Because many are the decrees that

In similibus  
facilis est  
deceptio.

our souls are liable to in this case; there are many things like grace, that are not grace; now it is the likeness and similitude of things that deceives, and makes one thing to be taken for another.

Many take gifts for grace, common knowledge, for saving knowledge, when as a man may have great gifts, and yet no grace; great knowledge, and yet not know Jesus Christ.

Some take common faith for saving; when as a man may believe all the truths of the Gospel, all the promises, all the threatnings, all the Articles of the Creed to be true, and yet perish for want of saving faith.

Some take morality and restraining grace, for piety and renewing grace; when as it is common to have sin much restrained, where the heart is not at all renewed.

Some are deceived with a half-work, taking conviction for conversion; reformation for regeneration: We have many Mermaid Christians;

Definitio piscis mulier formosa superne.

Or like Nebuchadnezzar's Image, head of gold, and feet of clay; The Devil

Dan. 2.32,  
33.

devil cheats many men by a Synecdoche  
 setting a part for the whole; as par-  
 tial obedience to some commands; for  
 universal obedience to all. Endless are  
 the delusions that Satan fastens upon  
 souls, for warrin of this self search  
 is necessary; therefore, that we try  
 our state, lest we mistake the shadow for  
 the substance; and embrace all cloud  
 instead of the sun; as to be dashed  
 to pieces. Satan will try us at some time or Luk. 2. 31.  
 other; he'll winnow us, and drive us to  
 the bottom; and if we now rest in a  
 thoughtless confidence, it will then end  
 in a most terrible despair.

Nay, God himself will search and  
 try us, at the day of judgement especi-  
 ally, and now how can abide that trial,  
 that never tries his own heart. And the  
 great satisfaction, as many state it, whether  
 we be altogether a Christian or no, whether Gal. 6. 4.  
 his principles be sound or no; yet it is  
 good to examine his own heart; If he find  
 his heart good, his principles right  
 and sound, this will be matter of  
 joycing; if he findes his heart rotten,  
 his principles false and unsound;  
 the discovery is in order to a renew-  
 ing; if a man have a disease upon him  
 and

and know it; he may send to the Physician in time; but what a sad vexation will it be, not to see a disease till it be past cure? so for a man to be graceless, and not see it till it be too late, to think himself a Christian when he is not, and that he is in the right way to heaven, when he is in the ready way to hell; and yet not know it till his death-bed, or a judgement-day confute his confidence; this is the most irrecoverable misery.

These are the grounds upon which I press this duty, not commanding long state, O that God would help us in the doing this necessary duty.

**Quest.**

is You'll say, But how shall I come to know whether I am almost, or altogether a Christian? If a man may go so far, and yet miserably, how shall I know when my foundation is right, when I am a Christian indeed?

**Ans.**

The altogether Christian does truly accept of Christ upon Gospel-terms. True union makes a true Christian; many close with Christ, but it is upon their own terms; they take him and own him, but not as God offers him. The terms upon which God in the

but

Gospel

Gospel offers Christ, and that you  
shall accept of a broken Christ with a  
broken heart, and yet a whole Christ  
with a whole heart.

A broken Christ with a broken heart,  
is a witness of our baseness; a whole  
Christ with the whole heart, as a witness  
of our sincerity. A broken Christ respects

his suffering for sin; a broken heart re-  
spects our sense of sin; a whole Christ  
includes all his offices; a whole heart  
includes all our faculties. Christ is a

King, Priest, and Prophet, and all as  
Mediator; without any one of these  
offices, the work of salvation could not  
have been compleated: As a Priest he

redeems us; as a Prophet he instructs  
us; as a King he sanctifies and saves  
us: Therefore the Apostle says, He is a Cor. 1:  
made to us of Gods wisdom; righteousness

sanctification, and redemption; righte-  
ousness and redemption flow from him  
as a Priest; wisdom as a Prophet;  
sanctification as a King.

Now many embrace Christ as a  
Priest, but yet they own him not as a  
King and Prophet; they like to share in  
his righteousness, but not to partake of

his holiness; they would be redeem-  
ed.



- ed by him, but they would not submit  
 Luk. 19. to him; they would be saved by his  
 27. blood, but not submit to his power.  
 Many love the priviledges of the Gos-  
 pel, but not the duties of the Gospel.  
 Now these are but almost Christians;  
 and notwithstanding their close with  
 Christ, for it is upon their own terms,  
 but not upon Gods. The Offices and  
 Christ may be distinguished, but they  
 can never be divided. *He doth not*  
 But the true Christian owns Christ  
 in all his Offices; he doth not, only  
 close with him as *Jesus*, but as *Lord*  
 Joh. 20. 28. *Jesus*, he says with *Thomas*, *My Lord,*  
*and my God.* He doth not only believe  
 in the merit of his death; but also con-  
 forms to the manner of his life; as he  
 believes in him, so he lives to him; he  
 takes him for his wisdom, (as well as  
 for his righteousness; for his sanctifi-  
 cation as well as his redemption.)  
 2. The altogether Christian bath  
 through work of grace and sanctification  
 wrought in the heart, as a spring of du-  
 ties. Regeneration is a whole change,  
 2 Cor. 5. all old things are done away, and all things  
 11. become new. It is a perfect work as to  
 parts, though not as to degrees. Car-  
 nal



men do duties, but they are from  
 an sanctified heart; and that spile  
 A new piece of cloth must doth well  
 in old garment, for there is but made  
 of. When a mans heart is through  
 renewed by grace, the mind saving  
 enlightened, the conscience through  
 convicted, the will truly humbled  
 and subdued, the affections spiritually  
 lifted and sanctified; and when mindy  
 and will, and conscience, and affec-  
 tions, all joyn issue to help on with the  
 performance of the duties commanded,  
 as a man altogether a Christian, Job  
 22. He that is altogether a Christian, doth  
 to the manner, as well as the matter  
 of his duties: not only that they be  
 done, but how they be done. He knows  
 the Christians priviledges, lyd in Pra-  
 sence, but his duty in *other* is; it must  
 not be only *bonum* good; but it must be  
 done, that good must be rightly done.  
 Here the almost Christian fails; he  
 doth the same duties that others do  
 for the matter, but he doth them not  
 in the same manner; while he mindes  
 the substance, he regards not the cir-  
 cumstance: If he pray, he regards not  
 faith and fervency in prayer; if he hear  
 he

1. d. mo. N  
 Mar. 9. 16.

Luk. 8. 18.

he doth not mind Christs Rule, *Tal*  
*Rom. 6. 17. bene bono ye bear*; If he obeys, he look  
*31. 9. 12. 13.* not to the frame of his heart in obey  
 ing; and therefore miscarries in all he  
 doth; *bonum oritur ex integra causa*  
*malum ex quolibet defectu*; any of these  
 defects spoil the good of every duty.

4. The altogether Christian is known  
 by his sincerity, in all his performances;  
 whatever a man does in the duties of  
 the Gospel, he cannot be a Christian  
 without sincerity. Now the almost  
 Christian fails in this; for though he  
 doth much, prays much, hears much,  
 obeys much, yet he is an hypocrite  
 under all.

5. He that is altogether a Christian,  
 hath an answerableness within to the  
 law without. There is a correspondence  
 between the Word of God, and the will  
 of a Christian; his heart is (as it were)  
 the transcript of the Law; the same  
 holiness that is commanded in the  
 Word is implanted in his heart; the  
 same conformity to Christ that is en  
 joyed by the Word of God, is wrought  
 in the soul by the spirit of God; the  
 same obedience which the Word re  
 quireth of him, the Lord enableth to  
 perform

perform by his grace bestowed on him. This is that which is promised in the New Covenant, *I will put my law* Heb. 9.10. *in their inward parts, and write it in* & 10.16. *their hearts,* Jer. 31. 33. Now the writing his Law in us, is nothing else but his working that grace and holiness in us which the Law commandeth, and requireth of us.

In the Old Covenant Administration, God wrote his Laws only upon tables of stone, but not upon the heart; and therefore, though God wrote them, yet they broke them; but in the New Covenant Administration, God provides new tables, not tables of stone, but the fleshy tables of the heart; and writes his Laws there, that there might be *the law within,* answer-2 Cor. 3.3. *able to the Law without;* and this every true Christian hath, so that he may say (in his measure) as our Lord Christ did, *I delight to do thy will, O my* Psal. 40.8. *God, thy Law is in my heart;* every believer hath a light within him, not guiding him to despise and slight, but to prize and walk by the light without him; the word commands him to walk in the light, and the light directs him

him to walk according to the word.

Moreover from this impression of the law upon the heart, obedience and conformity to God becomes the choice and delight of the soul; for holiness is the very nature of the new creature; so that if there were no Scripture, and Bible to guide him, yet he would be holy; for he hath received grace, for grace, there is a grace within to answer to the word of grace without.

Joh. 1. 16.

Now the almost Christian is a stranger to this law of God within; he may have some conformity to the word in outward conversation; but he cannot have his answerableness to the word in inward constitution.

6. The altogether Christian is dutiful in duty, and yet much above duty; much in duty in regard of performances; much above duty in regard of dependence: much in duty by obeying, but much above duty by believing. He lives in his obedience, but he doth not live upon his obedience; but upon Christ and his righteousness.

7. The almost Christian falls in this: he is much in duty, but not above it; but relying on it; he works for rest, and

He rests in his works; he cannot come to believe and obey too; if he believes, then he thinks there is no need of obedience, and so casts off that; if he be such in obedience, then he casts off believing, and thinks there is no need of that. He cannot say with David, *I Psal. 119. have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.* 166.

The more a man is in duty, and the more above it; the more in doing, and the more in believing, the more a Christian.

7. He that is altogether a Christian, is universal in his obedience; he doth not obey one command, and neglect another; do one duty and cast off another, *Psal. 119. 6.* but he hath respect to all the commands; he endeavours to leave every one, and love every duty.

The almost Christian fails in this; his obedience is partial and piece-meal; he obeys one command, he breaks another; he duties that least cross his will, he is much in; but those that do, he lays aside.

The Pharisees fasted, prayed, paid tithes, &c. but they did not lay aside their covetousness, their oppression, their murmurings, &c. *Mat. 23. 14.* Houses, they were natural to Parents. 8. The

8. The altogether Christian makes Gods glory the chief end of all his performances; If he prays, or hears, or gives, or fasts, or repents or obeys, Gods glory is the main end of all; if it is true, he may have somewhat else as his hither end of his work, but God is the further end; as Moses Rod swallowed up the Magicians Rods, Gods glory is the ultimate end that swallows up all his other ends. Now the almost Christian fails in this, his ends are corrupt and selfish; God may possibly be at the hither end of his work, but self is at the further end; for he that was never truly cast out of himself, can have no higher end than himself.

Now then examine thy Self by these characters; put the question to thy own soul, dost thou close with Christ upon Gospel-terms? is grace in the heart the principle of thy performances? dost thou look to the manner, as well as the matter of thy duties? dost thou do all in sincerity? is there an answerableness within to the law without? art thou much above duty, when much in duty? is thy obedience uni-

universal? Lastly, is Gods glory the end of all? if so, then art thou not only almost, but altogether a Christian.

Ob take heed of being almost, and yet 2. Use of almost a Christian; it is a great caution.

complaint of God against Ephraim that

is a cake not turned; that is, Hos. 7. 8.

half baked, neither raw nor roasted,

neither *luxus, et zeds*, neither cold nor *Neque crudus, neque coctus.*

as Laddicea, Rev. 3. 17. Because thou

neither hot nor cold, therefore I will

spue thee out of my mouth.

This is a condition that } Greatly unprofitable.

of all } Exceedingly uncomfortable.

others is } Desperately dangerous.

First, It is greatly unprofitable to be

almost a Christian, for failing in

any one point will ruine us, as surely

as if we had never made any attempts

for heaven. It is no advantage to the

soul to be almost converted; for the

little that we want, spoils the good of

all our attainments: we say, as good

never a whit as never the near; *ad ni-*

*hilum valet quod non valet ad finem su-* *Dens non*

*um: there is no profit in leaving this* *vult cum*

*or that sin, unless we leave all sin; He* *exceptione*

*colli-*

had heard John gladly, and did many

things,



things; but he kept his Herodias, and that ruined him. Judas did many things, prayed much, preached much, professed much, but yet his covetousness spoiled all; one sin ruined the young man; that had kept all the commandments, but one. Thus he that offends in one point is guilty of all. That is, that lives willingly and allowedly in any one sin, he brings the guilt of the violation of the whole Law of God upon his soul, and that upon a two-fold account.

1. Because he manifests the same contempt of the authority of God, in the wilfull breach of one, as of all.

2. By allowing himself in the breach of any one command, he shews he keeps none in obedience and conscience to God; for he that hates sin, as sin, hates all sin; and he that obeys the command as the express Will of God, obeys every command. And for this cause, the least sin willingly, and with allowance lived in, spoils the good of all our obedience, and lays the soul under the whole wrath of God. One

Jud. 8, 30, leak in a Ship may sink her, though she be tight every where else; Gideon had seventy Sons, and but one Bastard, and

31. comp.  
with ch. 9.  
verse 5.

dayes that one Bastard destroyed all his  
 for: so may one sin spoil all our ser-  
 vices; one full beloved may spoil all  
 profession, as that one Bastard slew  
 the Sons of Gideon.

Secondly, It is exceedingly uncomf-  
 ortable, as appears three ways.

In what such a one is hated of God  
 and men; the world hates him because

his Profession, and God abhors him be-  
 cause of his dissimulation; the world

hates him because he seems good, and  
 God hates him, because he doth but

so. No person that God hates  
 more than the almost Christian; I would

were either cold or hot, either all a  
 Christian, or not at all a Christian.

Because thou art neither cold nor hot,  
 therefore I will spew thee out of my mouth.

That a loathsome expression doth God  
 use, to shew what an utter abhor-

rence there is in him against like-  
 minded Christians.

How uncomfortable then must that  
 condition needs be, wherein a man is

hated both of God and man?

It is uncomfortable in regard of  
 springs; for being almost a Christian,

will bring us into suffering; but being  
 but

Rev. 3. 15.  
 verse 6.

Tepida e-  
 vomere  
 consuevi-  
 mus, unde  
 ad vom-  
 itum cien-  
 dum, qui-  
 dam aqua  
 tepida  
 utuntur.  
 Drus.

but almost a Christian, will never carry us through suffering. In *Matth.* 20, 21. it is said, *He that receiveth seed into stony ground, the same is he that hears the word, and with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.*

There are four things observable in the words.

1. That the stony ground may receive the word with joy.

2. That it may for sometime abide in a profession of it, be dureth for a while.

3. That this profession will expose to suffering; for mark, persecution is said to arise because of the Word.

4. This suffering will cause an apostatizing from profession; for that which is here called offence, is in *La.* 8. 13. called falling away, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

I gather hence, a profession may expose a man as much to suffering, as the power of godliness; but without the power of godliness there is no holding out in a profession and

suffering

suffering. The world hates the shew of godliness, and therefore persecutes it; the almost Christian wants the substance, and therefore cannot hold out in it.

Now this must needs be very uncomfortable; if I profess Religion, I am like to suffer; if I do but profess it, I am never like to endure.

3. It is uncomfortable in regard of that deceit it layes our hopes under, to be deceived of our hopes, causeth sorrow as well as shame; he that it but almost a Christian, hopes for heaven; but unless he be altogether a Christian, he shall never come there.

Now to perish with hope of heaven, to go to hell by the gates of glory; to come to the very door, and then be shut out, as the five Virgins were; to die Mar. 25. in the wilderness, within the sight of 10. the promised land, at the very brink of Jordan, this must needs be sad: to come within a stride of the Goal, and miss it; to sink within sight of harbour; oh how uncomfortable is this?

3. As it is greatly unprofitable, and exceedingly uncomfortable to be but almost a Christian, so it is desperately dangerous: For,

L

1. This

1. *This doth obicem ponere; it binds the true work; a man lies in a fairer capacity for conversion, that lies in open enmity and rebellion, than he that sooths up himself in the formalities of Religion. This I gather from that parable of the two Sons which our Lord Christ urged to the professing Scribes and Pharisees, Mat. 21. 28.*

Mat. 21.  
28, to 32.

*There was a man had two Sons, and he came to one and said, Go work to day in my Vineyard; he said, I will not; but afterwards repented and went.*

*And he came to the second, and said likewise; and he said, I go Sir, but went not.*

The first represents the carnal open sinner, that is called by the Word, but refuses, yet afterwards repents, and believes. The second represents the hypocritical professor, that pretends much, but performs little; Now mark how Christ applies this parable, v. 31. *Verily I say unto you, that the Publicans and the Harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.*

And upon this account it is better not to be at all, than to be almost a Christian; for the almost hinders the altogether. It is better (in this regard)

gard ) to be a sinner without a Profession, than to be a professor without conversion ; for the one lies fairer for an inward change, when the other rests in an outward. Our Lord Christ tells the *Scribe*, Mark 12. 34. *Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God*, and yet never like to come there. None farther from the Kingdom of God than such as are not far from the Kingdom of God. As for instance, when there lies but one lust, one sin between a soul and Christ, that soul is not far from Christ ; but now when the soul rests in this nearness to Christ, and yet will not part with that one lust for Christ, but thinks his condition secured, though that lust be not subdued, who is farther from the Kingdom of God than he?

So our Lord Christ tells the young man, Mar. 10. 21. *One thing thou lackest* ; why, he was very near Heaven, near being a Christian altogether, he was almost saved ; he tells Christ he had kept all the commands, v. 20. He lacked but *one thing* ; I say, but *one thing*, but it was a great thing ; that *one thing* he lacked, was more than all things he

had, for it was *the one thing necessary*; Luk. 10. 42 it was a new heart, a work of grace in his soul, a change of state, a heart weaned from the world; I, this was the one thing, and he that lacks this one thing, perishes with his all things else.

2. *This condition is so like a state of grace, that the mistake of it for grace is easie and common*; and it is very dangerous to mistake *any thing* for grace, that is not grace; for in that a man contents himself, as if it were grace. Formality doth often dwell next door to sincerity, and one sign serves both, and so the house may be easily mistaken, and by that means a man may take up his lodging there, and never find the way out again.

What one saith of wisdom, *Multi ad sapientiam pervenissent, nisi se jam pervenisse putassent*; many might have been wise, had they not thought themselves so, when they were otherwise. The same I may say of grace; Many a formal Professor might have been a sincere believer, had he not mistook his profession for conversion, his duties for grace, and so rested in that for sincerity, which is but Hypocrisy.



3. It is a degree of blasphemy to pretend to grace, and yet have no grace. I gather this from that Rev. 2. 9. *I know the blasphemy of them which say, they are Jews and are not.* This place undergoes varieties of constructions, Grotius and Pareus do not mistake their blasphemy to lye in their saying, *they are Jews and are not*; but to lye in the Reproaches that these Jews fastened upon Christ, calling him *Impostor, Deceiver, one that hath a Devil, &c.*

Brightman goes another way, and saith, This was the Blasphemy of these Jews, they retained that way of worship that was abrogated; and thrust upon God those old Rites and Ceremonies which Jesus Christ had abolished, and nailed to his Cross; by which they Col. 2. 14. overthrew the glory of Christ, and denied his coming. —

But I conceive the blasphemy of these Jews to lie in this, that they said they were Jews and were not. A Jew here is not to be taken literally and strictly only, for one of the lineage of Abraham, but it is to be taken Metonymically, for a true believer, one of the spiritual seed of Abraham; He is a Jew

Rom. 3. 29 *Jew which is one inwardly*; so that for a man to say he is a *Jew* when he is not, to profess an interest in Christ when he hath none, to say he hath grace when he hath none, this Christ calls blasphemy.

But why should Christ call this blasphemy? this is hypocrisy; but how may it be said to be blasphemy? why, he blasphemes the great attribute of Gods omniscience; he doth implicitly deny that God sees and knows our hearts and thoughts; for if a man did believe the omniscience of God, that he searches the heart, and sees, and knows all within, he would not dare to rest in a graceless profession of godliness; this therefore is blasphemy in the account of Christ.

— Bello  
pax ea de-  
terior.

4. *It is dangerous to be almost a Christian, in that this stills and serves to quiet conscience.* Now it is very dangerous to quiet conscience with any thing but the blood of Christ; it is bad being at peace, till Christ speaks peace; nothing can truly pacifie conscience, less than that which pacifies God, and that is the blood of the Lord Christ. Now the almost Christian

than quiets conscience; but not with the blood of Christ; it is not a peace flowing from Christs propitiation, but a peace rising from a formal profession; not a peace of Christs giving, but a peace of his own making; he silences and bridles conscience with a form of godliness, and so makes it give way to an undoing, soul-destroying peace; he rocks it asleep in the Cradle of duties, and then it is a thousand to one it never awaketh more till death or judgment.

Ah my brethren, it is better to have conscience never quiet, than quieted any way but by the blood of sprinkling: a good conscience unquiet, is the greatest affliction to Saints; and an evil conscience quiet is the greatest judgement to sinners.

5. *It is dangerous to be almost a Christian; in respect of the unpardonable sin; the sin that the Scripture saith, Can never be forgiven, neither in this world, Mat. 12. 31. nor in the world to come; I mean, the sin against the Holy Ghost; now such are only capable of sinning that sin, as are but almost Christians.*

A true believer cannot; the work of

grace in his heart, that seed of God abiding in him, secures him against it, 1 John 3. 9. compared with Chap. 5. 16, 17, 18.

The prophane, ignorant, open sinner cannot; though he lives daily and hourly in sin, yet he cannot commit this sin; for it must be from an enlightened mind; every sinner under the Gospel especially, sins sadly against the Holy Ghost; against the strivings and motions of the Spirit; he resists the Holy Ghost, but yet this is not the sin against the Holy Ghost.

There must be three ingredients to make up that sin.

1. It must be wilfull, Heb. 10. 26. If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin.

2. It must be against light and convictions, After we have received the knowledge of the truth.

Blasphemia  
in Spiritum  
Sanctum ea  
est qua quis  
destinata  
malitia

3. It must be *destinata malitia*, in resolv'd malice; now you shall find all these ingredients into the sin of the Pharisees, Mat. 12. 22. Christ beats one contra proprium animi sui sensum, Spiritus Sancti gratiam et virtutem, Deiq; gloriam oppugnat. Luc. Brugenf. in Mat. 12.

that

that was possessed with a Devil, a great work, which all the people wondred at, v. 23. But what say the Pharisees? see v. 24. *This fellow casteth out Devils by the Prince of Devils*; now that this was the sin against the Holy Ghost, is clear; for it was both wilful and malicious, and against clear convictions; they could not but see that he was the Son of God, and that this work was a peculiar work of the Spirit of God in him, and yet they say he wrought by the Devil; whereupon Christ charges them with this sin against the Holy Ghost, v. 31, 33. Now these Pharisees were a sort of great Professors: whence I gather this conclusion, That it is the Professor of Religion that is the subject of this sin; not the open carnal sinner, not the true believer, but the *formal professor*.

Compare  
this with  
Mar. 3. 28,  
29, 30.

Not the sinner, for he hath neither *light* nor *grace*; not the believer, for he hath both *light* and *grace*; therefore the formal professor, for he hath *light*, but no *grace*. Here then is the greater danger of being but almost a Christian, he is liable to this dreadful unpardonable sin.

6. *This being but almost a Christian, subjects us to Apostacy*; he that gets no good by walking in the wayes of God, will quickly leave them, and walk no more in them; this I gather from Hos. 14. 9. *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the wayes of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors fall therein.*

*The just shall walk in them*] he whose heart is renewed and made right with God, he shall keep close to God in his wayes.

*But the transgressor shall fall therein*] the word in the Hebrew is, *oyvā peshanghim*, from a word that signifies to prevaricate, so that we may read the words thus; *The wayes of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but he that prevaricates, that is an Hypocrite in the wayes of God, he shall fall therein.*

And unsound heart will never hold out long in the wayes of God, John 5. 35. *He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in that light.*

*For a season*] *προς ὥραν*, for an hour, a short



short space, and then they left him :  
 It is a notable question Job puts concerning the Hypocrite, *Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he alwayes call upon God?* Job 27.10.

He may do much, but these two things he cannot do.

He cannot make God his delight.

He cannot persevere in duties at all times, and in all conditions.

He will be an Apostate at last; the scab of hypocrisie usually breaks out in the plague sore of Apostacy; conversion ground is standing ground, it is *terra firma*; but a graceless profession of Religion is a slippery ground, and falling ground; Julian the Apostate, was first Julian the professor. I know it is possible a Believer may fall, but yet he rises Pro. 24.26 again, the everlasting arms are underneath, but when the Hypocrite falls, Deut. 33. 27. who shall help him up?

Solomon saith, *Wo to him that is alone when he falls*; that is, without interest in Christ, why wo to him? for he hath none to help him up. If Jesus Christ do not recover him, who can? David fell and was restored, for he had one to help him up; but Judas fell and perished, for he was alone.

7. This



7. This being but almost a Christian, provokes God to bring dreadful spiritual judgements upon a man.

Barrenness is a spiritual judgement: now this provokes God to give us up to barrenness: when Christ found the Figtree that had leaves, but no fruit, he pronounces the curse of barrenness upon it; Never fruit grow on thee more: and so, Ezek. 47. 11. The miry places thereof, and the marshy places thereof, shall not be healed, they shall be given to salt.

Mat. 21.  
19.

2 Thes. 2.  
10, 11, 12.

A spirit of delusion is a sad judgement: why, this is the almost Christians judgement, that receives the truth, but not in the love of it, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, for this cause God shall send them strong delusions.

Luk. 19 42

To lose either light, or sight, either Ordinances, or eyes, is a great spiritual judgement: why, this is the almost Christians judgement: he that profits not under the means, provokes God to take away either light or sight: either the Ordinances from before his eyes, or else to blind his eyes under the Ordinances.

To have a hard heart is a dreadful judgement.

judgement, and there is no hypocrite but he hath a hard heart.

My Brethren, it is a dreadful thing for God to give a man up to spiritual judgements.

Now this being almost a Christian, provokes God to give a man up to spiritual judgements; surely therefore it is a very dangerous thing to be almost a Christian.

8. Being almost, and but almost Christians, will exceedingly aggravate our damnation; the higher a man rises under the means, the lower he falls if he miscarries; he that falls but a little short of heaven, will fall deepest into hell; he that hath been nearest to conversion, being not converted, shall have the deepest damnation when he is judged. *Capernaums* sentence shall exceed *Sodom*s for severity, because she exceeded *Sodom* in the enjoyment of mercy; she received more from God, she knew more of God, she professed more for God, and yet was not right with God, therefore she shall be punished more by God. The higher the rise, the greater the fall; the higher the profession, the lower the dam-

Mar. 11.  
23, 24.

damnation, he miscarieth with a light in his hand, he perisheth under many convictions; and convictions never end but in a sound conversion, as in all Saints: or in a sad damnation, as in all Hypocrites: praying ground, hearing ground, professing ground, and conviction ground, is of all the worst ground to perish upon.

Now then to sum up all under this Head.

*If to be almost a Christian hinders the true work of conversion: If it be easily mistaken for conversion: If it be a degree of blasphemy: If this be that which quiets conscience: If this subjects a man to commit the unpardonable sin: If it layes us liable to Apostacy: If it provokes God to give us up to spiritual Judgements: And if it be that which exceedingly aggravates our damnation: Sure then it is a very dangerous thing to be almost, and but almost a Christian.*

*A Use of Exhort.*

*Oh labour to be altogether Christian, to go farther than they who have gone farthest, and yet fall short; this is the great counsel of the Holy Ghost, So run that ye may obtain, 1 Cor. 9. 24.*

*Give*

Give diligence to make your calling and election sure, 2 Pet. 1. 10.

Need you any motives to quicken you up to this important duty?

1. *This is that which is not only com-* Confid. 1.  
*manded by God; but that whereunto all*  
*the commands of God tend: A perfect*

conformity of heart and life to God, is the sum and substance of all the commands both of the Old and New Testament. As the Harlot was for the

dividing of the child, so is Satan for dividing the heart; he would have our

1 King. 3.  
16, 26.

love and affections shared between Christ and our lusts; for he knows that Christ reckons we love him not at all, unless we love him above all.

But God will have all or none. My Son, give me thy heart, Prov. 23. 26.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy Luk. 12. 29  
might, Deut. 6. 5.

Look into the Scripture, and see what that is upon which your only stands, and you shall find that God hath fixed it, upon those great duties which alone tend to the perfection of your state as Christians. God hath fixed your only upon believing, Mat. 5. 36.  
Give only believe. God

God hath fixed your *only* upon obedience, *Mat. 4. 10. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Phil. 1. 27. Only let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ*: So that your *only* is fixed by God upon those two great duties of *believing* and *obeying*, both which tend to the perfection of your state as Christians.

Now shall God command, and shall not we obey? Can there be a higher motive to duty, than the Authority of the Great God, whose will is the eternal Rule of Righteousness? O let us fear God, and keep his Commandments; for this is *לכל האדם* the *totum hominum*, the whole duty of man; so we read it.

*Consid. 2.* 2. The Lord Christ is a Saviour throughout, a perfect and compleat Mediator; he hath not shed his blood by halves, nor satisfied the Justice of God, and redeemed sinners by halves; No, but he went through with his undertaking, he bore all our sins, and he shed all his blood, he died to the utmost, satisfied the Justice of God to the utmost, redeemed sinners to the utmost,

utmost, and now that he is in heaven,  
he intercedeth to the utmost, and is Heb. 7. 25.  
able to save to the utmost.

It is observed that our Lord Christ  
when he was upon the earth, in the  
dayes of his flesh, he wrought no *Semi-*  
*plenam curationem*, no half-cures, but  
whomsoever they brought to him for  
healing, he healed them throughout,  
Mat. 14. 25, 36. *They brought unto him*  
*all that were diseased, and besought him*  
*that they might only touch the hem of his*  
*garment, and as many as touched, were*  
*made perfectly whole.*

Oh what an excellent *Infallibly,*  
Physitian is here! none *Suddenly,*  
like him; he cureth *Perfectly.*

He cureth *Infallibly*; none ever  
came to him for healing, that went  
without it; he never practised upon  
any that miscarried under his hand.

He cureth *Suddenly*; no sooner is  
his Garment touched, but his Patient Mar. 1. 31.  
is healed. *The Leper*, Mat. 8. 3. is no & 2. 12.  
sooner touched, but immediately cu- Luk. 8 41.  
red; the two blind men, Mat. 20. are  
no sooner touched, but their eyes are  
immediately opened, v. 34.

He



He cureth Perfectly; as in my as were  
 Mat. 14. 36 touched, were made perfectly whole.

Now all this was to shew what perfect and compleat Saviour Jesus Christ would be to all sinners that would but come to him. They should find healing in his blood, virtue in his righteousness, and pardon for all their sins, whatever they were; look as Christ healed all the diseases of all that came to him when he was on earth, so he pardons all the sins, and healeth all the wounds of all those souls that come to him, now he is in heaven.

He is a Saviour throughout, and shall not we be Saints throughout? Shall he be altogether a Redeemer, and shall not we be altogether Believers? O what a shame is this!

Confid. 3. 3. There is enough in Religion to engage us to be altogether Christians, and that whether we respect profit or comfort, for grace brings both.

First, Religion is a gainful thing, and this is *argumentum cogens*, a compelling motive, that becomes effectual upon all; Gain is the God whom the world worships; what will not men do, what will they not suffer for gain?

what



what journeys do many take by Land,  
what voyages by Sea, through hot and  
cold, through fair and foul, through  
storm and shine, through day and  
night, and all for gain!

Now there is no calling so gainful as  
this of Religion; it is the most profita-  
ble employment we can take up. *God-  
liness is profitable unto all things, 1 Tim.*  
*4. 8.* It is *μὲγας πορισμὸς*, a great Reve-  
nue; if it be closely followed, it brings  
in the greatest income; indeed some  
men are religious for the worlds sake,  
such shall be sure not to gain; but they  
who are religious for Religions sake,  
shall be sure not to lose, if heaven and  
earth can recompence them; for *God-  
liness hath the promise both of the life that* *1 Tim. 4. 8.*  
*now is, and of that which is to come.*

Ah who would not be a Christian,  
when the gain of godliness is so great!  
many gain much in their worldly cal-  
ling, but the profit which the true be-  
liever hath from one hours commu-  
nion with God in Christ, weigheth  
down all the gain of the world; cur-  
sed be that man who counts all the  
gain of the world worth one hours  
communion with Jesus Christ, said  
that

Prov. 3.  
13, 14:

that Noble Marquess *Galeatius Carac-*  
*ciola*. It is no where said in Scripture, *3. A*  
happy is the man that findeth Silver, *ing*  
and the man that getteth fine Gold, *an f*  
these are of no weight in the ballance *profit.*  
of the Sanctuary: but it is said, *Happy*  
*is the man that findeth wisdom, and the* *world*  
*man that getteth understanding; for the* *mans.*  
*Merchandize of it is better than the Mer-* *Am*  
*chandize of silver, and the gain thereof* *Ha*  
*than fine gold.*

By wisdom and understanding here, *Th*  
we are to understand the Grace of *st of*  
Christ, and so the Spirit of God inter- *the pr*  
preteth it, *Job 28. 28. Behold the fear* *in t*  
*of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart* *all is*  
*from evil is understanding.* *but a*

Now of all Merchants, he that trades *hour*  
in this wisdom and understanding, *s pr*  
will prove the richest man: one gram *wilt*  
of godliness outweigheth all the Gold *is no*  
of *Ophir*: there is no riches like being *wor*  
rich in Grace. For, *henc*

1. *This is the most necessary riches; other*  
*things are not so: silver & gold are not* *mer*  
*so; we may be, and be happy without* *Be*  
*them: there is but one thing necessary,* *so o*  
*and that is the Grace of Jesus Christ,* *The*  
*in the heart; have this, and have all;* *inbe*  
*want this, and want all.* *that*  
*2. It*

2. *It is the most substantial gain; the* Luk. 16. 11  
 things of this world are more shadow  
 than substance; pleasure, honour, and  
 profit, comprehend all things in this  
 world, and therefore are the carnal  
 things of the Trinity.

*Ambitiosus honos, & opes, & sœda  
 voluptas,*

*Hæc tria pro trino Numine mundus  
 habet.*

The Apostle John calls them, the 1 Joh. 3. 9.  
 lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and  
 the pride of life; this (saith he) is all that  
 is in the world; and truly if this be all,  
 all is nothing; for what is pleasure  
 but a dream and conceit? what is ho-  
 nour but fancy and opinion? and what  
 profit but a thing of nought? *Why*  
*wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which*  
*is not?* Prov. 23. 5. The things of the  
 world have in them no solid sub-  
 stance, though foolish carnal men call  
 them substance.

But now Grace is a substantial good;  
 our Lord Christ calls it, Prov. 9. 21.  
*That I may cause those that love me to*  
*inherit substance,* לְרַחֵם חַיִּיל to inherit  
 substance; Grace is a reality, other  
 things are but shew and fancy.

3. God-

לְרַחֵם חַיִּיל  
 Et non  
 existunt.

3. *Godliness is the safest gain*; the gain of worldly things is always with difficulty, but seldom with safety: the soul is often hazarded in the over-eager pursuit of worldly things; nay, thousands do pawn, and lose, and damn their precious souls eternally for a little silver and gold, which are but the guts and garbage of the earth.

Mar. 6. 26. *And what is a man profited to gain the whole world, if he lose his soul?*

But the gain of Godliness is ever with safety to the soul, nay the soul is lost and undone without it, and not saved but by the attainment of it: a soul without grace, is in a lost and perishing condition; the hazard of eternity is never over with us, until the Grace of Christ Jesus be sought by us, and wrought in us.

1 Tim. 6. 17.

4. *Godliness is the surest profit*; as it is safe, so it is sure; men make great ventures for the world, but all run upon uncertainties; many venture much, and wait long, and yet find no return but disappointment; they sow much, and yet reap nothing.

But the gain of Godliness is sure, Prov. 11. 18. *To him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward.*

And as the things of this world are certain in the getting, so they are certain in the keeping.

*Non minor est virtus quam querere parta tueri.*

If men do not undo us, Moths may; robbery doth not, rust may; if rust doth not, fire may; to which all earth-treasures are incident, as our Lord Christ teacheth us, *Mat. 6. 19.* Solomon smneth the World with wings, *Prov.*

*5. Riches take themselves wings, Habent non alas passeras, sed aquilinas.*  
 and flie as an Eagle towards Heaven. A man may be rich as Dives to day, and it is poor as Lazarus to morrow: Oh

how uncertain are all worldly things! But now the true treasure of Grace in the heart, that can never be lost: it is out of the reach both of rust and robber: he that gets the world, gets a good as it can never keep; but he that gets grace, gets a good he shall never lose.

*5. The profit of godliness lieth not only 1 Tim. 4. 8.*  
 in this world, but in the world to come: nor all other profit lieth in this world

only: riches and honours, &c. are called this worlds goods, but the riches *1 Joh. 3. 17.*

Godliness is chiefly in the other worlds goods, in the enjoyment of God

God and Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, among Saints, and Angels in glory: Lo, this is the *gain of godliness*.

*Psa. 145. 9. such honour have all his Saints.*

6. *The gain of godliness is a durable and eternal gain:* all this worlds goods are perishing; perishing pleasures, perishing honours, perishing profits, perishing comforts, riches are not for ever.

*Job 38. 12. saith Job, hast thou entred into the treasures of the snow?* Gregory upon these words observes, that earthly treasures are treasures of snow: what pains do children take to scrape and rowle the snow together to make a snow-ball which is no sooner done, but the heat of the Sun dissolves it, and it comes to nothing! Why, the treasures of worldly men, are but treasures of snow: when death and judgement come, they melt away and come to nothing. Riches profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death, *Prov. 11. 4.*

You see here the great advantage of Godliness: so that if we look at profit we shall find enough in Religion to engage us to be altogether Christians. Or

2. *If we look at comfort,* Religion is the most comfortable profession; there



are no comforts to be compared to the comforts of grace and godliness.

1. *Worldly comfort is only outward, it is but skin deep; in the midst of laughter the heart is sorrowful, Prov. 14. 13.* But now the comfort that flows from godliness is an inward comfort, a spiritual joy, therefore it is called gladness of heart, Psal. 4. 7. *Thou hast put gladness in my heart; other joy smooths the brow, but this fills the breast.*

2. *Worldly comfort hath a nether spring; the spring of worldly comfort is in the creature, in some earthly enjoyment, and therefore the comfort of worldly men must needs be mixed and muddy; an unclean fountain cannot send forth pure water, Jam. 3. 11.* But spiritual comfort hath an upper spring; the comfort that accompanies godliness, flows from the manifestations of the love of God in Christ, from the workings of the blessed Spirit in the heart, which is first a Counsellor, and then a Comforter; And therefore the comforts of the Saints must needs be pure and unmixed comforts, for they flow from a pure Spring.

3. *Worldly comfort is very fading and*

M

tran-



transitory; the triumphing of the wicked is  
 Job 20. 5. but short; and the joy of the hypocrite is but  
 for a moment. Solomon compares it to  
 the crackling of thorns under a pot,  
 Eccl. 7: 6. which is but a blaze, and  
 soon out, so is the comfort of carnal  
 hearts; but now the comfort of godli-  
 ness is a durable and abiding comfort;  
 Joh. 16. 22. your heart shall rejoyce, and your joy no  
 man shall take from you.

The comfort of godliness } In Life.  
 is lasting, and everlast- } In Death.  
 ing, it abides by us } After Death.

Phil. 1. 2. First, It abides by us in life; grace and  
 Col. 1. 2. peace go together; godliness brings forth  
 comfort and peace naturally; the effect of  
 righteousness shall be peace; It is said of

Isa. 32. 17. the Primitive Christians, they walked  
 in the fear of the Lord, and in the com-  
 fort of the Holy Ghost, A.C. 9. 31. Every  
 duty done in uprightness and sincerity,  
 reflects some comfort upon the soul;  
 Psa. 19. 11. In keeping the commands there is great re-  
 ward; not only for keeping of them, but  
 in keeping of them; as every flower, so  
 every duty carries sweetness and refreshing  
 with it.

Object. But who more dejected and disconsolate  
 than Saints and Believers? whose lives

are more uncomfortable ? whose mouths are more filled with complaints than theirs ? if a condition of godliness and christianity, be a condition of so much comfort, then why are they thus ?

That the people of God are often Sol. times without comfort, that I grant ; they may walk in the dark, and have no light ; but this is none of the product of godliness ; grace brings forth no such fruit as this ; there is a three-fold rise and spring of it,

*Sin within.*

*Desertion*

*Temptation*

} without.

1. *Sin within* ; the Saints of God are not all spirit and no flesh, all grace and no sin ; they are made up of contrary principles ; there is light and darkness in the same mind ; sin and grace in the same will, carnal and spiritual in the same affections ; there is *the flesh* *lusting* Gal. 5.17. *against the spirit* in all these ; and too oft the Lord knows, is the believer led away captive by these warring lusts ; so was the holy Apostle himself, *I find* *then a law, that when I would do good,* Rom. 7.23. *evil is present with me,* Rom. 7. 21. and 23. *I see another law in my members,*

warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin; and this was that which broke his spiritual peace, and filled his soul with trouble and complaints, as you see  
 2. 24. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death.*

So that it is sin that interrupts the peace of Gods people; in-dwelling lust stirring and breaking forth, must needs cause trouble and grief in the soul of a believer; for it is as natural for sin to bring forth trouble, as it is for grace to bring forth peace; every sin contracts a new guilt upon the soul, and guilt provokes God; and where there is a sense of guilt contracted, and God provoked, there can be no peace, no quiet in that soul, till faith procures fresh sprinklings of the blood of Jesus Christ upon the conscience.

2. Another spring of the believers trouble and disconsolateness of spirit, is the desertions of God; and this follows  
 Psal. 13. 1. upon the former; God doth sometimes disappear, and hide himself from his people, verily thou art a God that hidest thy self, Isa. 45. 15. But the cause of Gods hiding, is the believers sinning.

Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, Isa. 59. 2. In Heaven where there is no sinning, there is no losing the light of Gods countenance for a moment; and if Saints here could serve God without corruption, they should enjoy God without desertion; but this cannot be, while we are in this state remaining lusts will stir and break forth, and then God will hide his face, so this must needs be trouble, *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled, Psa. 30. 7.*

The light of Gods countenance shining upon the soul, is the Christians heaven on this side heaven; and therefore it is no wonder if the hiding of his face be looked upon by the soul, as one of the days of hell; so it was by David; *The sorrows of death compassed me, the pains of hell gat hold upon me, [Psa. 116. 3.]* sound trouble and sorrow.

3. A third spring of that trouble and complaint that brims the banks of the Christians spirit, is the temptations of Satan, & exerts, he is the great enemy of Saints, and he envieth the quiet and comfort that their hearts are filled with, when his conscience is brimmed

with horror and terror; and therefore though he knows he cannot destroy their grace, yet he labours to disturb their peace: As the blessed spirit of God is first a sanctifier, and then a comforter, working grace in order to peace; so this cursed spirit of hell, is first a tempter, and then a troubler; first perswading to act sin, and then accusing for sin: and this is his constant practice upon the Spirits of Gods people, he cannot endure that they should live in the light of Gods countenance, when himself is doom'd to eternal, intolerable darkness.

And thus you see whence it is that the people of God are often under trouble and complaint; all arises from these three springs of

Sin within:

Desertions

Temptations

} without:

If the Saints could serve God without sinning, and enjoy God without withdrawing, and resist Satan without yielding, they might enjoy peace and comfort without sorrowing; this must be endeavoured constantly here; but it will never be attained fully but in heaven.

But

But yet so far as grace is the prevailing principle in the heart, and so far as the power of godliness is exercised in the life, so far the condition of a child of God is a condition of peace; for it is an undoubted truth, *that the fruit of righteousness shall be peace*: But suppose the people of God experience little of this comfort in this life, yet,

2. *They find it in the day of death*; grace and holiness will minister unto us then, and that ministration will be peace. A believer hath a two-fold spring of comfort, each one emptying it self into his soul in a dying season; one is from above him, the other is from within him: the spring that runs comfort from above him, is *the blood of Christ sprinkled upon the conscience*; the spring that runs comfort from within him, is *the sincerity of his heart in Gods service*; when we lye upon a Death-bed, and can reflect upon our principles and performances in the service of God, and there find uprightness and sincerity of heart running through all, this must needs be comfort: it was said to *Hezekiah*, *Remember O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and*



with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight, Isa. 38. 3.

Nothing maketh a Death-bed so uneasy and hard, as a life spent in the service of sin and lust; nothing makes a death-bed so soft and sweet, as a life spent in the service of God and Christ. Or put the case the people of God should not meet with this comfort then, yet,

3. They shall be sure to find it after death; if time bring none of this fruit to ripeness, why yet eternity shall; grace in time, will be glory in eternity; holiness now, will be happiness then; whatever is in a man sown in this world, that he shall be sure to reap in the next world; He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh

Gal. 5. 7.

Gal. 6. 8.

Rom. 6. 23.

reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting; When sin shall end in sorrow and misery, holiness shall end in joy and glory; Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,

Mat. 25. 23. Whoever shareth in the grace of Christ, and conformeth to the life of Christ in this world, shall share in the joyes of Christ in the world to come, and that joy is joy unspeakable,

1 Pet. 1. 18.

and full of glory; lo, here is the fruit of god-



godliness; say now if, there be not enough in Religion, whether we respect profit or comfort, to engage us to be Christians throughout.

4. *What an entire resignation wicked Confi-  
dents make of themselves to their lusts; and  
shall not we do so to the Lord Christ?  
they give up themselves without re-  
serve to the pleasures of sin, and shall  
we have our reserves in the service of  
God? they are altogether sinners, and  
shall not we be altogether Saints? they  
run and not faint in the service of their  
lusts, and shall we faint and not run in  
the service of Christ? shall the ser-  
vants of corruption have their ears  
boared at the door posts of sin, in token  
of an entire and perpetual service, and  
shall we not give up our selves to the  
Lord Christ, to be his for ever? shall  
others make a Covenant with hell and  
death, and shall not we joyn our selves to  
God in an everlasting Covenant that can  
not be forgotten? *Acritus ille ad perniciem  
quam nos ad salutem?* shall they take  
more pains to damn their souls, than  
we do to save ours; and make more  
speed to a place of vengeance, than we  
do to a Crown of righteousness.*

Exo. 21. 6.

Isa. 28. 15.

Jer. 50. 5.

2 Tim. 4. 8.

M 5.

Which

WHICH do you judge best, to be saved everlastingly, or to perish everlastingly? which do you count the best Master, God or the Devil? Christ or your lusts? I know you will determine it on Christs side: Oh then! when others serve their lusts with all their hearts, do you serve Christ with all your hearts; if the hearts of the sons of men be fully set in them to do evil, then much more let the hearts of the sons of God be fully set in them to do good.

Ecc. 8. 5.

Jer. 3. 5.

Consid. 5.

5. If ye are not altogether Christians ye will never be able to appear with comfort before God, nor to stand in the judgement of the last and great day; for this sad dilemma will silence every Hypocrite; If my commands were not holy, just and good, why didst thou own them? if they were holy, just and good, why didst thou not obey them? If Jesus Christ was not worth the having, why didst thou profess him? if he was, then why didst thou not cleave to him, and close with him? If my ordinances were not appointed to convert and save souls, why didst thou sit under them, and rest in the performance of them? Or if they were, then why didst thou

not

not

not

not submit to the power of them? If Religion be not good, why dost thou profess it? if it be good, why dost thou not practise it? Friend, how camest thou in hither; not having on a wedding garment? if it was not a wedding feast, why didst thou come at the invitation? if it was, then why didst thou come without a wedding-garment? Mat. 22. 12.

I would but ask an hypocritical professor of the Gospel, what he will answer in that day. Verily you deprive your selves of all possibility of apology in the day of the righteous Judgement of God; it is said of the man that had no wedding garment on, that when Christ came and examined him, he was speechless; he that is graceless in a day of grace, will be speechless in a day of judgement; professing Christ without a heart to close with Christ, will leave our souls inexcusable, and make our damnation unavoidable, Mat. 11. 21.

These are the motives to enforce the duty; and oh that God would set them home upon your hearts and consciences, that you might not dare to rest a moment longer in a half-work, or

or in being Christians within a little, but that you might be altogether Christians!

Quest.

But you will say possibly, how shall I do? what means shall I use, that I may attain to a through work in my heart, that I may be no longer almost, but altogether a Christian?

Ans.

Now I shall lay down three Rules of direction, instead of many to further and help you in this important duty, and so leave this work to God's blessing.

Direct.

First, Break off all false peace of conscience; this is the Devil's Bond to hold the soul from seeking after Christ. As there is the peace of God, so there is the peace of Satan; but they are easily known, for they are as contrary as Heaven and Hell, as light and darkness.

The peace of God flows from a work of grace in the soul, and is the peace of a Regenerate state; but the peace of Satan is the peace of an unregenerate state, it is the peace of death; in the Grave, Job saith, there is peace; there the wicked cease from troubling; so a soul dead in sin is full of peace, the wicked one troubleth him not.

The peace of God in the soul, is a peace

peace flowing from a removal of guilt by justifying Grace; Rom. 5. 10. Being justified by faith in his bloody we have peace with God, but the peace of Satan in the soul arises, and is maintained by a stupidity of spirit, and insensibility of guilt upon the conscience.

The peace of God is a peace from sin, that fortifies the heart against it; The peace of God that passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, Phil. 4. 7. the more of this peace there is in the soul, the more is the soul fortified against sin; but the peace of Satan is a peace in sin's the strong man armed keeps the house, and there is all at peace, Luk.

11. 21. The Saints peace is a peace with God, but not with sin; the sinners peace is a peace with sin, but not with God; and this is a peace better broke than kept; it is a false, a dangerous, an undoing peace; my brethren, death and judgement will break all peace of conscience, but only that which is wrought by Christ in the soul, and is the fruit of the blood of sprinkling; when he gives quietness, no longer shall trouble; Job 34. 29. Now that peace that is worldly will break, why

why should you keep? who would be  
fond of that quietness which the flames  
of hell will burn in sunder? and yet  
how many travel to hell, through the  
fools Paradise of a false peace?

Oh break off this peace: for we can  
have no peace with God in Christ,

whilst this peace remains in our hearts;

It is *not* *existence* *prohibet* *ulterius*. The

Lord Christ gives no peace to them that

will not seek it; and that man will ne-

ver seek it, that doth not see his need

of it; and he that is at peace in his lust,

feels no need of the peace of Christ. The

sinners must be wounded for sin, and trou-

bled with it, before Christ will heal his

wounds, and give him peace from it.

**Direct. 2.** Labour after a thorough work of con-

viction: every conviction will not do,

the almost Christian hath his convictions,

as well as the true Christian; or else he

had never gone so far; but they are not

sound and right convictions; or else he

had gone farther; God will have the

soul truly sensible of the bitterness of

sin, before it shall taste the sweetness of

Mercy. The plow of conviction must

go deep, and make deep Furrows in

the heart, before God will sow the

precious



precious seed of Grace and Comfort there; that so it may have depth of earth to grow in. This is the constant method of God. First to shew man his sin, then his Saviour: First his danger, then his Redeemer: First his wound, then his cure: First his own vileness, then Christs Righteousness. We must be brought to cry out, *unclean, unclean*; to mourn for him whom we have pierced, and then he sets open for us a fountain to wash in for sin, and for uncleanness. *Zach. 12. 4.* *alt. verses comp. with Zach. 13. 1.* That is a notable place, *Job 33. 17, 28.* He looked upon men, and if any say, *I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not*; He will deliver his soul from going into the Pit, and his life shall see the light. The sinner must see the unprofitableness of his unrighteousness, before he profits by Christs righteousness. The Israelites are first stung with the fiery serpents, and then the brazen serpent is set up. *Ephraim* is first thoroughly convinced, and then Gods bowels of mercy work towards him. Thus it was with *Paul, Manasseh, the Saylor, &c.* So that this is the *unchangeable*

Numb. 21.

6, 8.

able method of God in working grace, to begin with conviction of sin.

Oh therefore labour for through conviction; and there are three things we should especially be convinced of.

1. *First, Be convinced of the evil of sin, the filthy and heinous nature of it; this is the greatest evil in the world; it wrongs God, it wounds Christ, it grieves the Holy Spirit, it ruineth a precious Soul; all other evils are not to be named with this. My Brethren, though to do sin be the worst work, yet to see sin is the best sight; for sin discovered in its vileness, makes Christ to be desired in his fulness.*

But above all, labour to be convinced of the mischief of an unsound heart; what an abhorring it is to God, what certain ruine it brings upon the soul. Oh think often of the *Hypocrites Hell, Mat. 14. 51.*

2. *Be convinced of the misery and desperate danger of a natural condition: for till we see the plague of our hearts, and the misery of our state by nature, we shall never be brought out of our selves, to seek help in another.*

3. *Thirdly, Be convinced of the miser*

insufficiency and inability of any thing below Christ Jesus, to minister relief to thy soul in this case: all things besides Jesus Christ are *Physicians of no value*; Job 13. 4. duties, performances, prayers, tears, self-righteousness, avail nothing in this case; they make us like the troops of Tema, to return ashamed at our disappointment from such failing brooks. Job 6. 19.

Alas! it is an infinite righteousness that must satisfy for us; for it is an infinite God that is offended by us. If ever thy sin be pardoned, it is infinite mercy that must pardon it; if ever thou be reconciled to God, it is infinite merit must do it; if ever thy heart be changed, and thy state renewed, it is infinite power must effect it; and if ever thy soul escape hell, and be saved at last, it is *infinite Grace* must save it.

In these three things right and sound conviction lieth, and wherever the spirit of God worketh these through convictions, it is in order to a true and sound conversion; for by this means the soul is brought under a right qualification for the receiving Christ.

You must know, that a sinner, *qua sinner*, a sinner, can never come to Christ

Christ; for he is dead in sin, in enmity against Christ, an enemy to God, and the Grace of God: but there are certain qualifications that come between the souls dead state in sin, and the work of conversion and closing with Christ, whereby the soul is put into a capacity of receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. For no man is brought immediately out of his dead state, and made to believe in Jesus Christ; there are *termini medianter*, some qualifications coming in between; now sound convictions are the right qualifications for the sinners receiving Christ; for he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; that is, such as see themselves sinners, and thereby in a lost condition; so Luke explains it, *The Son of man is come to seek, and to save that which was lost; he is anointed and sent to bind up the broken-hearted, to comfort all that mourn.*

Oh therefore if you would be sound Christians, get sound convictions; ask those that are believers indeed, and they will tell you, had it not been for their convictions, they had never sought after Christ for sanctification and

See Nori-  
ons Orthod.  
Evangelist,  
p. 130.

Mat. 9.  
12, 13.

Luk. 9. 10.  
Na. 61. 1, 2.

*Periissem  
nisi peti-  
issem.*

and salvation; they will tell you, they had perished if they had not perished; they had been in *eternal bondage*, but for their *Spiritual bondage*, had they not been lost as to themselves, they had been utterly lost as to Christ.

3. *Never rest in convictions, till they Direct. 3.*  
*end in conversion*: this is that wherein

most men miscarry; they rest in their *convictions*, and take them for *conversion*; as if sin seen were therefore forgiven, or as if a sight of the want of Grace, were the truth of the work of Grace.

That is a notable place in *Hos. 13. 13. Ephraim is an unwise son, for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children.* The place of the breaking forth of children is the womb; as the Child comes out of the womb, so is conversion born out of the womb of conviction; now when the Child sticks between the womb and the world, it is dangerous; it hazards the life both of mother and child; so when a sinner rests in conviction, and goes no farther, but sticks in the place of the breaking forth of children; this is very dangerous, and hazards the life of the soul.

You

You that are at any time under *convictions*, oh take heed of resting in them; do not *stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children*; though it is true that conviction is the first step to conversion, yet it is not conversion; a man may carry his convictions along with him into hell.

What is that which troubleth poor creatures when they come to dye, but this? I have not improved my convictions; at such a time I was convinced of sin, but yet I went on in sin, in the face of my convictions; in such a Sermon I was convinced of such a duty, but I slighted the conviction; I was convinced of my want of Christ, and of the readiness of Christ to pardon and save, but alas I followed not the conviction.

My Brethren, remember this, *slighted convictions* are the worst Death-bed Companions. There are two things especially which above all others make a Death-bed very uncomfortable.

1. *Purposes and Promises not performed.*

2. *Convictions slighted and not improved.*

When



When a man takes up purposes to close with Christ, and yet puts them not into execution; and when he is convinced of sin and duty, and yet improves not his convictions, Oh this will sting and wound at last.

Now therefore, Hath the Spirit of the Lord been at work in your souls? Have you ever been convinced of the evil of sin, of the misery of a natural state; of the insufficiency of all things under heaven to help; of the fulness and Righteousness of Jesus Christ, of the necessity of resting upon him for pardon and peace, for sanctification and salvation? Have you ever been really convinced of these things? Oh then as you love your own souls, as ever you hope to be saved at last, and enjoy God for ever, improve these convictions, and be sure you rest not in them till they rise up to a through close with the Lord Jesus Christ, and so end in a sound and perfect conversion. Thus shall you be not only *almost*, but *altogether Christians*.

**FINIS.**

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